The Beauty of the British Alps

or

Love at first sight

# THE AUTHOR'S APOLOGY.

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If apology ever was necessary to any work, it must be to the present, since from circumstances unnecessary to detail, the first hasty and unfinished draught was taken from me, without its having received the benefit of a single revision. Family events intervening, some considerable time elapsed before I resumed my task, and when I did I had not a single page of the manuscript or a memorandum to refer to. Compelled both by honour and circumstances to complete my task, I took the bold alternative of trusting entirely to memory, cheered by the prospect of having the proof sheets pass through my hands, and of

thus being enabled to make *some* corrections. But this unfortunate performance was predestined to go forth with all its faults upon its head, my going abroad precluding any possibility of my devoting any further attention to its pages.

Under these circumstances, as well as its being a *first* essay, I hope to win some indulgence from my readers, and trust that they will not suffer the errors of the *present*, to prejudice the *future* efforts of the same pen.

THE

# BEAUTY OF THE BRITISH ALPS,

## LOVE AT FIRST SIGHT

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### CHAPTER I.

" ——A matchless pair,
With equal virtue form'd, and equal grace;
The same, distinguish'd but in sex alone
Hers the mild lustre of the blooming morn,
And his the radiance of the risen day." THOMSON.

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"GOOD Heavens!" exclaimed Mrs. Belmont, starting from her seat at the parlour window, "Hither comes Adela, pale, and leaning on the arm of a stranger! Fly, Alice, and admit them."

In a few moments the object of the anxious exclamation entered the room, and throwing herself into the arms of her mother, cried in a voice tremulous from recent terror—

"O! mamma, what an escape I have just had!"

"You terrify me my love! what has happened?" tenderly inquired Mrs. Belmont.

"I had not long left Mrs. Annesley's," replied Adela, "when something startled the horse:—setting off at full speed, the servant who drove was thrown: I with difficulty kept my seat, till just as we reached Milford's cottage, when had not that gentleman," pointing to the stranger who had followed her into the room, "flown to the head of the horse, I should have been dashed to pieces! when he had once checked the furious animal, he resigned the bridle to others, and lifted me from the carriage."

"O! sir," cried Mrs. Belmont, now quitting her daughter, and approaching the stranger, "what language can express the gratitude of my heart for the preservation of my child."

"None is necessary, madam," he replied, "my pleasure if possible is even beyond your own, in being the instrument of that preservation."

"But you are injured, sir!" cried Mrs. Belmont, perceiving the stranger's arm hang useless by his side. "Good God! why did you not speak immediately?"

Adela started from the sofa, exclaiming—

"Your arm is broken!" and flew instantly from the room to dispatch a messenger for the surgeon.

"O! you are enduring much anguish!" cried she re-entering, and advancing with a hurried step to her deliverer. "I shall never forgive myself for the suffering I have been the means of inflicting on you."

The stranger who grew every moment paler, entreated the ladies not to alarm themselves; but the interval till the arrival of the surgeon was to them one of mental torture, equal perhaps to the physical agony of the sufferer. At length Mr. Bentham arrived, and

they withdrew to wait anxiously the result of his visit.

"But did you not tell me," inquired Mrs. Belmont as soon as they reached the drawing-room, "that Mrs. Annesley's servant was thrown out? He ought to be inquired after."

"Certainly, poor fellow!" cried Adela with a feeling of self-reproach. "I have been so bewildered and terrified, that I have forgotten every thing. But do not ring, mamma," she added, arresting her mother's hand just as it reached the bell; "in pity to my suffering preserver, let there not be the least noise. I will step softly down stairs, and send Alice to make inquiries."

Miss Belmont had been spending a few days at Glanman, a small estate at the distance of about four miles, in the possession of Mrs. Annesley, the aged and respectable widow of a clergyman. She was the most intimate friend of Mrs. Belmont, and hers was the only family which Adela visited till within the last six months, when their circle was agreeably enlarged by a Captain Auber and his daughter taking up their residence in Conway Vale. Between these families Adela now divided her hours of leisure, and when the accident of the morning occurred, was hastening home to prepare for a short stay with her new friend Caroline Auber, from whom she had the day before received a note, expressing an earnest and particular desire to see her.

As soon as Mr. Bentham quitted his patient, Mrs. Belmont had him summoned to the drawing room, to make her inquiries as to the extent of the injury the

stranger had received, and learned with concern that it was serious. The effect of a long and fatiguing journey, contributed to increase the ill effects of the accident, and there were such indications of fever, that Mr. Bentham had advised his patient to retire to bed.

"But my counsel is so opposed to his inclination, that I fear," continued that gentleman, "it will avail but little; therefore to your care, ladies, I commit him, recommending the utmost quiet and repose."

When the surgeon withdrew, Mrs. Belmont and Adela returned to the parlour, where they found the unknown reclining on the sofa in evident pain; against all entreaty he rose as they entered, and Mrs. Belmont with a countenance of the deepest concern, inquired how he felt—

"O! infinitely better madam," he replied in a voice of assumed cheerfulness, "my worthy doctor was for mortifying me in bed, but I always cheat the sons of Esculapius, whenever I have the misfortune to be under their hands, by recovering as quickly as I can, which is always best effected by not giving way."

"In general," replied Mrs. Belmont, "I think your plan is a good one, but probably not in the present instance. If you cannot be persuaded to retire immediately, I must nevertheless insist that you do at a very early hour in the evening; allow me to institute myself your nurse, and accept such accommodation as my humble home affords."

"Madam," cried the stranger with a countenance beaming with pleasure, "if it will not be infringing too much on your courtesy, I shall accept your proffered hospitality with delight; but if it should be the occa-

sion of any inconvenience, believe me there is not the slightest necessity for it—a distance of two miles would be no great difficulty to one much more seriously hurt than I am. On your honour," cried he taking Mrs. Belmont's hand with a smile, "I shall not be an incumbrance."

"So far from it," cried she with a corresponding expression, "that if I could divest myself of the idea of what you are suffering, your stay would give me the liveliest pleasure."

"O! my dear madam," cried the lively and elegant unknown, "thus encouraged, I shall be on your hands for a month. Ah! I have at length found professors of the healing art, from whom I shall not escape as heretofore."

As he spoke he glanced at Adela—their eyes met, and hers were immediately cast down. Though she had taken no part in the conversation since their return to the room, she had not been an abstracted or inattentive observer. The stranger was young, handsome, and elegant; and viewed through the medium of grateful interest, every charm he possessed was heightened in her eyes. Never had she beheld a being who approached so near perfection; no, not even in the efforts of the pencil, or the florid descriptions of the poet. His figure was tall and majestic, his air graceful and distinguished, his manner, like his voice, soft, gentle, and insinuating; his darkly fringed eyes were full of fire and softness, his finely formed head was adorned with curilng hair that might have rivalled the raven's wing, as his teeth might have done the

swan's, and the hand, (white as the cambric handkerchief it held,) attested not less by its form and colour than by the manner in which it was used, the rank to which he belonged.

But while Adela, almost unconsciously to herself, had been imbibing the charms of his polished manner, and canvassing the graces of his person, he had not been less struck with her surpassing loveliness. Traces of Italian lineage were visible in her delicate and expressive features, in her large and melting eyes of the darkest hazel; but the pure tints of her complexion shewed her claim to a British origin also. Her form was an exquisite combination of all that is most beautiful in the fairest forms of either clime; her bright auburn hair fell in glossy and natural ringlets, on a neck fair as polished ivory, while the elegant simplicity of her dress indicated the taste and delicacy of her mind.

The entrance of Alice to inform them that Robert (Mrs. Annesley's servant) was uninjured, and that he waited to know if there was any message he could take back to his mistress, interrupted the conversation. After expressing her satisfaction in the youth's safety, Mrs. Belmont turned to Adela, saying—

"Had you not better, my love, send Mrs. Annesley a note to convince her you are safe. I know the kindly heart of my old friend will be alarmed the moment she hears of the circumstance."

"I will, mamma," cried Adela, rising; "and do you think I may take upon me to promise for Caroline that we will accept her invitation for next Thursday

Had the accident not occurred, I had intended to have driven round to her, for I promised to send back the reply by Robert."

"If so," cried Mrs. Belmont. "After he has refreshed himself, Robert may as well carry the invitation to Miss Auber."

"Miss Auber!" repeated the stranger. "Are you acquainted with Miss Auber?"

A feeling she could not define immediately seized the heart of Adela; for the first time she sickened at the name of Caroline, her lately loved and beautiful friend, in the eager expression of delight that animated the fine face of the unknown, she read the lover, and in the deepest recess of her soul she murmured—"Enviable Caroline! Happy Miss Auber!"

"Intimately," replied Mrs. Belmont, turning with new interest to the stranger. "Miss Auber and her father are my most esteemed friends."

"O! add her brother to the number!" cried he, rising with a countenance beaming with sweetness, and taking the hand of Adela, who, with an animation and delight burning in her eyes of which she was not conscious, turned to him exclaiming—

"Are you indeed the brother of Miss Auber?"

"Yes, and never was I prouder of the title than now," cried he, raising her hand to his lips, "since it gives me a claim to your friendship."

Alas! he might have read in the blush that deepened on Adela's cheek, that he needed no other auxiliaries than his own beautiful person, and captivating manners, to gain an interest in her breast.

"My dear, madam," he continued, turning to Mrs.

Belmont, "I am the most fortunate of knight errants in having met with such an adventure, but at the same time the most stupid, in not having sooner divined that the beings now before me could be no other than those who have been so often described to me with enthusiasm in my sister's letters. I arrived last night, and was clamorous for an introduction; but Caroline told me you were indisposed, and Miss Belmont absent from home; I was therefore forced to acquiesce in the delay, and the fates, in recompense of the virtuous patience with which I submitted, decreed the event of the morning."

"You are not likely soon to forget your introduction," cried Mrs. Belmont.

"I question if it were possible under any circumstances, a being so insensate could be found as to forget such new friends, having once beheld them:" again his beaming eyes met Adela's, who sought in arranging the paper for her note, to hide the sweet confusion that agitated her heart.

"I will take advantage of the same opportunity, and send my father a line to inform him of the accident," cried Mr. Auber, seating himself at the table. "I dare say it will bring them down. I am glad," he continued, as he dipped his pen into the inkstand, "that it is not my right arm."

"O! my dear Adela," cried her mother, "how perverse was fate to make you the occasion of so much mischief."

"It were happy for mankind, my dear madam, if she never made greater; a broken arm is soon cured, but there are other wounds more deep, more danger-



*"I will take advantage of the same opportunity, and send my Father a line."* Page 10.

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ous," replied Mr. Auber. "Will Miss Belmont," he continued, "fold and seal my note for me; you see I already assume the privileges of an old friend."

"Not with more pleasure than they are accorded," replied Mrs. Belmont, as Adela with a trembling hand took the note from Mr. Auber, and her own name, with a note of admiration after it, caught her eye.

"I have lost my seal, mamma," cried Adela, "have you one?"

"Use mine," cried Mr. Auber, "as it is not material; but I am afraid you will find it awkward as it is is attached to my watch," he drew out his watch but being secured by a guard, and in too much pain to remove that guard from around his neck, though he opened his waistcoat to make the attempt, Adela was obliged to rise and lean near him as she sealed the notes.

Alas! a heart yielding as the wax she impressed, received an impression it was destined never to lose, and oppressed by feelings new and overpowering, she gladly embraced the opportunity of leaving the room, in order to give directions to Robert.

## CHAPTER II.

" They loved; but such their guileless passion was,
As in the dawn of time inform'd the heart
Of innocence and undissembled truth.
*  *  *  *  *
Th' enchanting hope, and sympathetic glow
Beamed from the mutual eye." THOMPSON.

" THEN you think, my dear madam, that my father's health has improved since his residence in Wales?" said Mr. Auber, as Adela re-entered the parlour.

" Certainly," replied that lady. " He has received much benefit from the baths; and I trust he will not think of leaving us till he is quite re-established."

" Why I rather think you will be plagued with him some time," continued Mr. Auber, smiling, " for he has not only put himself out to nurse, but his fortune also, and in either case the restoration is seldom so speedy as it is desired. This little place he possesses here was almost forgotten; but, like a true friend, in spite of neglect it receives and succours him in the hour of adversity."

" I never thought," cried Adela, " I should rejoice in the misfortunes of my friends; but," added she, with warmth, " I should never have been truly happy, had Captain Auber been more fortunate."

" My sweet Miss Belmont," replied Mr. Auber with a smile, expressive as that which illuminated her own

features. "We are *mis-terming* the change in my father's circumstances. If to exchange the glare of fashionable life for the calm of retirement; if to resign the efforts of art for the perfection of nature is desirable, here, surrounded as he is, he may be regarded the most enviable of beings."

"You have a brother, Mr. Auber; if my memory is not treacherous, I have heard the Captain speak of two sons," said Mrs. Belmont.

"I have a brother, madam, in the guards, one of the finest young men the light of heaven ever shone on. He thought he should not do mischief enough, so he got into a red coat. Without partiality, I have often thought, he ran a hazard of meeting the fate of Narcissus."

"I trust not," said Mrs. Belmont. "The greatest charm of beauty is unconsciousness."

"And as she made the remark, she could not help feeling how conspicuous was that rarest of all charms in Mr. Auber, who, while praising his brother, had an easy ingenuousness in his manner that shewed his thoughts were entirely abstracted from himself.

"I feel it," replied he, bowing and looking at Adela. "But though Frederic is very young, he has ever evinced himself superior to the weakness of vanity, and as yet invulnerable to the power of love; but let me not forget to add, he has never visited North Wales."

At this moment a carriage stopped at the door, and Adela flew to the window, exclaiming—

"This is Miss Auber, I dare say," and in a few

minutes, accompanied by Captain Auber, she entered the room.

"My dear Seeton!" she exclaimed, hastening to her brother. "How are you?"

"Only too happy!" he replied, as drawing her towards him he kissed her cheek. "Dearest, sir!" he continued, turning to his father, "I hope you are quite equal to the exertion you have made, I told you I was doing very well."

"Ah!" replied the Captain; "but I was determined to see, I know how apt you are to make light of things; and let me tell you, you had better have followed the advice of Mr. Bentham, (whom I have just seen,) and retire to bed. You will feel the effects of this to-morrow."

There was displeasure mingled with anxiety in the Captain's tone, and Mrs. Belmont fancied that his manner to her wanted its usual friendliness; but as the conversation became general, his irascibility wore off, and after dinner he again assumed the air of insinuating gentleness and affability for which he was distinguished. But a counterfeit is never so clearly seen as in the presence of the reality, and Adela now felt the difference there was between Captain Auber and his son: the former wore a surface of courtesy, which was sometimes condescension, sometimes gallantry, sometimes complaisance, according to the rank, character, and circumstances of those he conversed with: but Seeton's gentleness, emanating from a soul imbued by all the softer virtues, was equal and open to all; his affability, springing from a fund of good hu-

mour and real warmth of heart, was genial and glowing as the aspect of summer.

"I have brought back your note, Adela," said Caroline with a provoking smile, handing it to her across the table after dinner; "for the benefit of having it translated."

Adela coloured as she recollected the agitation under which it was penned, and on opening it was surprised at the scrawl that met her view, which in addition to the illegibility of the writing, every now and then wanted a letter or a word.

"I have not been myself since the accident of the morning," cried Adela, crushing the note in her hand and throwing it into the fire-place. "I will try if I can speak more intelligibly, however; therefore come from your corner there between mamma and Captain Auber, and I will tell you Mrs. Anneslev's arrangements."

"Pray admit me to the conference," cried Seeton.

"O! most willingly," replied Adela, as he seated himself at her side; but a momentary glance at the arch expression of Caroline's face again disconcerted her, who, turning with an ironical smile to Mrs Belmont, cried—

"How reserved these young people are! how difficult and slow in becoming acquainted!" th[illegible]
her place at th[illegible]

[illegible] were Mrs. Belmont and her daugh[illegible]
were already awaiting him.

He appeared to Adela more interesting than e[illegible]
as he replied with his usual grace and sweetness
their anxious inquiries. His colourless cheek, a[illegible]
the languor of his large eyes evinced the effect of p[illegible]
and want of sleep; but so far from invading the bea[illegible]

that good old lady invites every one that will come to cards and dancing; for ye ken," cried Adela, slightly and playfully imitating the Scotch accent, "she expects her grandson, a bonny boy fra' the north, and she wishes to make merry on the occasion."

Seeton, whom it took by surprise, laughed heartily.

"But," continued Adela, resuming her proper tone, "in soliciting the presence of Miss Auber, she is not unmindful what her humble entertainment must appear to one accustomed to the splendid assemblies of the metropolis, and she therefore hopes while you have the condescension to grace her ball-room, you will have the charity to overlook its deficiencies.'

"What could be refused to such a pleader?" cried the admiring Seeton, taking Adela's hand. "As your good Mrs. Annesley invites every body, I may of course regard myself as a guest, and may I hope the honour of this fair hand, though under the circumstances of my left arm I shall be but a lame partner."

Adela had just bowed in assent, when the Captain exclaimed—

"Are you mad Seeton? Do you want to throw yourself into a fever?"

"Do not alarm yourself, sir," replied his son, "the [illegible]ther is not so hot."

was sometimes [illegible],' the Captain; 'I know sometimes complaisance, according to the [illegible] this racter, and circumstances of those he conversed with: but Seeton's gentleness, emanating from a soul imbued by all the softer virtues, was equal and open to all; his affability, springing from a fund of good hu-

"Yes, certainly," cried Caroline, "Thursday is an *immense* way off, four *whole* days; time enough to mend all the arms in these Alpine regions, especially with the prospect of a ball at the end of them!"

"And such a partner!" added Seeton.

As soon as the tea equipage was removed, Captain Auber rose to take leave, his health not admitting of late hours, and his humour this evening little inclining him for company. Speaking a moment aside to his son, he represented the ease and the propriety of his returning home, but Seeton assured him he had already in the most decided manner accepted Mrs. Belmont's invitation. Captain Auber bit his lips with vexation, but with great self-command turned to that lady, saying—

"I have been endeavouring to persuade this refractory invalid to retire, he looks excessively fatigued."

"And I hope you have succeeded, for I was just going to enforce the same command."

"The current sets so strongly against me, that I must even yield to its force," cried Seeton, rising. "Mrs. Belmont I kiss your hand: my fair partner in perspective adieu. Caroline, my dear father,

To all and each a fair goo[illegible]

And [illegible]

*chambre*, where Mrs. Belmont and her daughter were already awaiting him.

He appeared to Adela more interesting than ever as he replied with his usual grace and sweetness to their anxious inquiries. His colourless cheek, and the languor of his large eyes evinced the effect of pain and want of sleep; but so far from invading the beauty

her provoking smiles she tripped after Captain Auber to the carriage.

As soon as it was known that Mr. Auber was to remain at Mrs. Belmont's, Adela's room had been fitted up for him. She stole a few moments from his society to see that every thing was properly arranged; with her own hand she disposed the hangings, and placed and replaced the ornaments of the room; so that, though accustomed to a far different abode, he could not but admire the taste and simplicity that every thing displayed. Saville wished to remain up all night in the adjoining dressing-room, but Mr. Auber, persuaded there was no necessity for it, dismissed him till eight o'clock the following morning.

Adela that night shared her mother's bed, but she had pressed her pillow for some hours ere sleep would weigh her eye-lids down, and steep her senses in forgetfulness; and then visions of the being who had captivated her senses during the day, filled her imagination during the night.

## CHAPTER III.

"In colour, form, expression, and in grace,
She shone all perfect; while each pleasing art
And each soft virtue that the sex adorns
Adorn'd the woman." GRAINGER.

" ——— On his brow
Sat native comeliness, and manly fire
O'er all diffused its lustre. Yet with her
His generous mind most swayed, where shone each thought
That delicacy knows: far more refined
Than suits the happy." KEATE.

SAVILLE found his master so indisposed when he attended him the next morning, that he endeavoured to persuade him not to rise, at least till Mr. Bentham's visit was over; but though from excess of pain he had not closed his eyes all night, he insisted on joining the ladies at the breakfast table. He found this morning his toilet not the easy task it had hitherto been; but that did not prevent his persevering: and at length he descended to the parlour in his *robe de chambre*, where Mrs. Belmont and her daughter were already awaiting him.

He appeared to Adela more interesting than ever as he replied with his usual grace and sweetness to their anxious inquiries. His colourless cheek, and the languor of his large eyes evinced the effect of pain and want of sleep; but so far from invading the beauty

of his countenance, this paleness, this languor, gave him charms more dangerous, more seductive, since it increased his native softness, and wooed Adela's admiration under the mask of grateful pity.

His pale pink morning gown well became the delicacy of his appearance, while every thing else he wore rivalled the unfallen snow; and Adela, as she viewed him, wondered if the world of fashion was peopled with such beings.

Little was said during breakfast, it was rather the reign of feeling than expression. Secton sat back in the arm-chair, which he smilingly said he was privileged in taking, and in silence contemplated the lovely Adela as she poured the tea into the white china cups. Her simple white muslin dress revealed the contour of a form exquisite as nature ever moulded, while her countenance, tinted with the faintest blush, wore a pensive sweetness, even more enchanting than the brilliancy that had illumined it the preceding evening.

When Mr. Bentham was announced, Mrs. Belmont and Adela withdrew, the former to superintend some domestic arrangements, the latter, not as hitherto to her studies, her pencil, or her needle; but to fix by fond reveries the impression her heart had imbibed. Born in the bosom of a romantic country, her character had received its impress from the scenes that surrounded her. While yet a child, she had beheld the setting sun tinge with a rosy hue the white summit of Snowdon's mountain, with feelings that grew into rapture, with emotions pure, sublime, and elevated Penmaenmawr, with its wild precipices overhanging the sea, the silver waters of the Conway, the ever-

varying beauties of her native vale, and the rich scenes of Llangollen, all served to nurture the fanciful and imaginative turn of her mind. Breathing in the "poetry of nature," her ideas, her language, aided by an elegant education, possessed a witchery, a charm that

> "Would take the prison'd soul
> And lap it in Elysium."

And her mother, who beheld in her the last and loveliest relic of former happiness, indulged and cherished her sensibility, because it added charms to her too beautiful child, without considering that it was rendering her wholly unfit for the rude encounters of real life.

After Mr. Bentham's departure, Adela wished to return to the solitary inmate of the parlour, but timidity restrained her, and half an hour elapsed before inclination gained the mastery. The door was a-jar, she paused ere she entered—all was still; perhaps, she thought, Mr. Auber has gone up stairs; emboldened by the idea, she pushed open the door and entered. Seeton was there—he had thrown himself on the sofa and fallen asleep; and riveted by a species of fascination to the spot, she stood and gazed upon him. His forehead white as Parian marble from which his black hair receded in a thousand fanciful curls; the long jetty lashes that reposed on his pale cheek; the beautifully formed mouth which still retained its soft vermillion; the grace and elegance of his extended figure, all formed a picture that had won upon a heart less susceptible than Adela's

Perceiving that the sun was beginning to intrude into the room, she gently drew down the blind, and taking off a white silk hankerchief, which she had thrown across her shoulders while attending to her garden after breakfast, she gently placed it over his head, and stole from the room as she fancied she heard the approach of footsteps.

She had not been long seated at the drawing room window when she perceived Caroline approaching, and flying down she admitted her with a caution to make no noise.

"Why!" cried Caroline, speaking in imitation of her youthful friend.

Adela pushed open the parlour door, and pointed to Seeton.

"There he lies, like an eastern Sultan!" cried his sister, "I suppose it would be treason to wake him?"

"You would not be so cruel," replied Adela in a subdued tone, "he had no rest all night."

"I think he runs a fair chance of having very little for the rest of his life," said Caroline, looking significantly at Adela. "Be content with the mischief you have already done, and don't disturb the peace of an innocent family."

Adela smiled, and led the way to the drawing room.

"You have never had the curiosity to inquire my reason for writing to you at Mrs. Annesley's," said Caroline, going up to the window.

"Indeed, I quite forget the circumstance," artlessly acknowledged Adela. "What was it?"

"You do not deserve that I should tell you. I have a great mind to be offended. Was it Mrs. Annesley's

prancing poney, or Seeton, that put it out of your head?"

"Nay, you have rallied me enough on that event. Tell me, dear Caroline, why you wished to see me?"

"Well then," rejoined her friend, "it was to know if you would like to accompany me to London."

"O! what would delight me more?" ejaculated Adela.

"The motive of Seeton's journey hither," resumed Miss Auber, "is to take me to London, to be present at the marriage of my cousin Emilia Auber, to Lord Milson, son of the Earl of Errol. It will be a grand affair, and I think you cannot have a better opportunity of seeing a little of life. What killing and slaying there will be among the beaux! and you are what they usually term one of your innocent beauties, who make more work in one season, than a French coquet armed at all points, and full tilt for conquest does in all her life."

"But do you think," cried Adela, as doubt threw a momentary gloom over her countenance, "that mamma will consent to my taking such a journey?"

"Why you simpleton," cried Caroline, "to be sure she will, and be delighted at the opportunity of shewing to the world the treasure that destiny has hid in a corner of North Wales. Do you suppose she wishes it to be sung of you some thirty years hence—

'A-down in the valley there lived an old maid?'"

"If you imagine," cried Adela, "that any scheme of matrimonial ambition mingles in the delight with which I anticipate sharing your journey, you wrong

me. I would prefer the retirement of Conway Vale with one to whom chance had introduced me, and to whom my heart would beat without reference to any thing but his individual merit, to a ducal coronet, if the shadow of an artifice contributed to the winning."

"I wonder where I could procure a pair of stilts," said Caroline, turning with affected gravity to her brother, who just then slowly entered the room. "Adela is not *half* tall enough when she talks thus. My dear, madam," perceiving Mrs. Belmont immediately behind him, "I am going to ask you a great favour. You must promise not to refuse me."

"I dare say I might very safely, yet I should like to know what is expected of me, before I make such an unqualified stipulation," replied the mild Mrs. Belmont.

"I am going a little journey, not to the shores of the Polar Seas, nor to the coasts of Chili or Peru, but to London. Can you bear to part with Adela for a few weeks, and permit her to accompany me?"

In a glance Mrs. Belmont read the anxiety with which all present waited her decision, and though a thousand indefinable apprehensions thronged to her heart, she had not the courage to refuse; so hard is it to an amiable heart to inflict pain where it has the power of dispensing pleasure. Her acquiescence was paid by a profusion of thanks and caresses, and the arrival of Mrs. Annesley and her grandson Malcolm Noel found the whole party in the highest spirits.

Malcolm was a very fine young man, full of intelligence and animation. Unspoiled and unhacknied in the world, he came with some of the rust of college about

him, but with much also of the rich ore of erudition, and the noble pride which he inherited from a long line of Highland ancestors. His form was athletic, his complexion brilliant, and his eyes penetrating. There was an originality in his ideas, and a frankness in his manners, that prepossessed every one at Mrs. Belmont's in his favour; and the worthy Mrs. Annesley, delighted to perceive him win the esteem of those she most valued, seemed to want nothing to add to her felicity.

"You did not tell me," he cried, as he drove his grandmother back to Glannam, "of this Beauty of the British Alps—this maid of the graceful locks. I should have solicited her hand for Thursday evening, but for the presence of that gentleman of the long robe whose attentions she received so graciously."

"I have little doubt, but that you have been anticipated," replied Mrs. Annesley, "few would lose the opportunity of such a partner."

"Thanks to the rules of an assembly, she cannot be entirely monopolized," observed Malcolm. "Pray what age is this beautiful daughter of Conway Vale?"

"Ah! you bring back the memory of the day of her birth," answered the old lady. "It was the day before your brother Lochlin ran away with Miss Griffith: a headstrong boy! what trouble he caused me! I was remaining with Mrs. Belmont, poor thing; and when the news was brought me I thought I should have died; for I knew the Griffiths were a proud unpleasant people, and that I should never hear the last of it."

Malcolm thought much the same, and regretted a

query that had served as a key to unlock a magazine of old recollections.

"It is sixteen years come the close of this June," resumed Mrs. Annesley.

"So young!" exclaimed Malcolm, "her countenance is certainly youthful, but the perfection of her form indicates a further advance in womanhood. But yours is a testimony I cannot doubt. Mrs. Belmont has been equally beautiful; there is a surpassing sweetness still about her person, and an indescribable charm in her voice and manners. Is she a native of this place?"

"No," replied his aged companion, "she is a native of Italy, but she has been so many years in England and Wales, that she has lost much of her foreign habits. Few discover that she is not a native: but you are a keen observer, Malcolm."

"And her father?" continued young Noel, prosecuting his inquiries.

"Was an Englishman," she replied, "a man of genius, and a man of many sorrows."

"Of course!" said Malcolm with a sigh, "such ever is the tide of talent's fortune everywhere;

'And as it runs, for ever will run on.'

He died, I suppose, leaving his daughter no inheritance but her beauty?"

"Little else," was the reply; and their arrival at Glannam put an end to the conversation.

## CHAPTER IV.

"What avails from iron chains
Exempt, if rosy fetters bind us fast."

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CAROLINE had brought a note from her father which induced Mr. Auber to take his seat in the carriage by her side when she returned home, which she did to dinner; and Adela with feelings of regret she had never before experienced watched it out of sight. The hope of seeing them the next day, and the anticipation of the day after, acted however as a cordial to her depressed spirits, and she flew to employment to fill up the "aching void" their departure had left in her heart. She took up a book, but she soon found she was pursuing creations of her own fancy, instead of attending to the author, and she laid it down again: she opened her piano, but the pages of the music she turned over were either too sad or too gay; and after a few minutes she closed the instrument. At length she retired to her own room, the room that Seeton had occupied, and which he would probably occupy no more, and there she sunk into a trance of thought, which was at last interrupted by the falling of a picture—she went to raise it, it was a half finished portrait she was taking of her mother, the thought struck her that she would give it a few touches; but as she

seated herself to the task, a small piece of ivory that lay accidentally on the table was drawn towards her, and in a few moments, as if by magic, the outline of Seeton Auber's countenance appeared upon it; pleased with the success, she grew interested in her work, and bestowed on it the most elaborate pains. The summons to dinner was obeyed with regret, and she returned to the miniature with impatient pleasure the moment the cloth was removed.

The original of the picture was at that moment engaged in a conversation of which she was the subject; for the restless fears of Captain Auber did not allow him to leave the matter long untouched after he had once succeeded in getting his son home.

"I assure you, sir," Seeton replied in answer to some observations of his father, "nothing can be more groundless than your apprehensions."

"I tell you sir, I think very differently," cried the irritated Captain. "I tell you sir, that you have not acted as you should do under the circumstances of your engagement with the daughter of Lord Egremont."

"No, to be sure," said Caroline, aside to her brother, "you should have let Adela have been dashed to pieces."

Seeton ill suppressed a smile at his sister's mock solemnity, but he saw that his father, who was pacing up and down the room, was in no humour to bear trifling, and merely replied with coolness—

"Was I the husband, instead of the lover of Miss Egremont, I do not see how I could have acted differently from what I have done."

"The devil you don't!" ejaculated the Captain, stopping suddenly short in the full career of his *marching campaign.* "The devil you don't! so you could not help taking up your abode in the house—you could not help instead of seeking remedies and repose, sitting ogling and gallanting—you could not help—but I have no patience! Curse the whole country, and the hour that brought me into it."

"Curses, like young chickens, always come home to roost," again whispered Caroline.

"Pray sir, if I may ask the question, what is your opinion of Miss Belmont?" demanded the Captain.

"That she is the most perfect of human beings: she has beauty without affectation; knowledge without pedantry; and a soul as faultless as her form. I shall attempt no disguise of the admiration with which she has inspired me; I might as well pretend to be blind to the beams of the sun: but do you therefore hold so lightly my sentiments of honour, as to think I would break an engagement so solemn as that in which I stand involved with Miss Egremont? No, sir, was I less candid you might have cause to fear. I owe too much to the partiality of Lord Egremont, to violate my faith to his daughter. My attentions to Miss Belmont have been nothing more than common-place gallantry, and just admiration, an admiration that also extends to her mother."

The Captain appeared somewhat appeased, and spoke in a calmer voice as he resumed—

"I am willing to place every dependance on your principles of honour, but when in the presence of strong temptation the best often break through them.

I know the impetuosity of youth, its folly, its want of foresight; and when I reflect on the efforts I have made to raise the superstructure of your fortune, I may well tremble at any thing that threatens its demolition. There is my brother, your uncle, takes no trouble, and yet such is the good sense and conduct of his children, that every thing goes well. Here is a match Emilia is making with Lord Milsom!" and he looked reproachfully at Caroline, who had rejected an equally advantageous offer.

"For what," he continued, "have I withdrawn myself from the world, and buried myself in this barbarous country, but to recruit my fortune for your sakes. I have but one remaining passion—ambition in my children—do not blast it."

He left the room, and Caroline and Seeton sat for a few moments looking at each other in silence.

"I am glad the thunder-storm is over," exclaimed Caroline, breaking the silence first. "You see I did not escape some flashes of the lightning. Emilia is doing a *mort* of mischief, we must none marry less than nobles *now*."

"Perish the policy that fixes happiness on so perishable a basis!" warmly exclaimed Seeton. "How perverted are the sentiments of polished life, how are the best feelings of our nature bartered for 'as much trash as can be grasped thus;' and that which should be a union of soul, becomes a sordid compact of interest. I hate the world!"

"Saving, and excepting," cried Caroline, "a certain piece or parcel called Belmont Cottage. But seriously, Seeton, you should be more guarded in your conduct;

and not suffer your admiration to lead you away. Conscious of your engagement you may guard your own heart, but remember you may invade the peace of Adela's. Her extreme youth, her inexperience in life, all render her liable to fall into the snare, especially as she has the plea of gratitude under which to shelter and disguise the first approaches of love. I thought (though perhaps unconsciously to yourself) you were playing the lover too much this morning, you appeared perfectly to follow the prescription of the poet :—

' ——If the lover hopes to be in grace,
Wan be his looks, and meagre be his face;
That colour from the fair compassion draws,
She thinks you sick, and thinks herself the cause.' "

" I hope you do not think me," eagerly cried her brother, " that contemptible, that ungenerous character, a male coquet? I would not wound the peace of Adela for the world! Intimate as you have so long been, I suppose she knows of my engagement."

" Really I do not know," replied his sister, " it may have been casually mentioned, but perhaps she took no notice of it."

" Well I have not the vanity to think I have gained any particular interest in Miss Belmont's heart," cried Seeton. " I have not the affectation to pretend to say I *could* not, provided her heart is disengaged, but trust me, situated as I am I never will be base enough to make the attempt."

" I have just thought," cried Caroline, " that I am

in another dilemma. Papa will be outrageous at our taking Adela to London with us."

"You had certainly better have consulted him before you made the invitation; however, as it is, if he should object, we must bear him down by the force of argument."

"Which he cannot murmur at yielding to for once," added Caroline, "when we have so often submitted to the argument of force."

Mr. Auber now rung for Saville, and determining to nurse himself in right earnest retired to his room, that he might be perfectly recruited for the ball on Thursday, which he could not disguise from himself he was anxious to attend.

Caroline left to herself sunk into a melancholy, which was at all times observed to oppress her in spite of the habitual sprightliness of her nature. Her countenance, though beautiful, had an expression of hauteur which these occasional fits of spleen tended to increase, they added also to the loftiness of a mien naturally too prone to wear the arrogance of rank; but, again resigning her air of displeasure, she would change to a shadowed softness, a melancholy tenderness, as if love and sorrow contended for the mastery. If her father surprised her in these humours she instantly endeavoured to regain her self-command, and disguise her feelings. He was a parent more feared than loved, he possessed none of the confidence of his children, who felt themselves united to him more by the legal compact of society than the endearing ties of nature. With Adela, Caroline had more freely

yielded to her feelings than with any other person, but even to her he had not yet divulged their source.

The world had had an unbenign influence on the character of Miss Auber, and though unable wholly to corrupt, had vitiated its original excellence.



## CHAPTER V.

"O! she was beautiful
Beyond the reach of fancy.
And he, the fated one, who gazed on charms
Resplendent as the full-orb'd god of day,
Should have fled far their fatal influence."

THURSDAY morning came, and the joyous sun look-ed forth upon the mountains in his brightest splendour; the birds whistled

"Their native wood-notes wild,"

with more than usual sweetness; and Adela's soft tones were heard at an early hour joining the universal concert. Never had her heart felt so buoyant; she seemed to move on air, the personification of beauty and beatitude. Her morning orisons were the breathings of enthusiasm, her soul flew "from nature up to nature's God" with ardent gratitude. Every



thing on which she gazed in the beautiful temple of creation seemed to call forth that sentiment with a fervency she had never felt before; when had the sky been so blue, the sun so bright, the waters of the Conway so clear, the meads so gay, the groves so verdant, the warblers of the woods so symphonious? She met her mother with a transport of delight, hung on her neck, kissed her cheek, her hands, as if a new source of filial love had opened in her heart, and was overflowing it.

Mrs. Belmont, in whose breast neither years nor sorrows had frozen the stream of sensibility, melted into fondness over this child of vivid fancy, and entrancing beauty, kindled into corresponding gaiety; so that Adela felt herself stimulated and sustained till the hour when Captain Auber's carriage, driving up to the door, brought all that made the *acmé* of her felicity. She saw Seeton and his sister alight, and sunk for a moment on the sofa, to endeavour to give a pause to feelings that almost denied her the power of respiration.

She rose as Mr. Auber advanced to take her hand. Ah! where at that moment was Seeton's philosophy, or what would it have availed in the beaming presence of the beautiful Adela: her eyes were burning and sparkling with intense feeling, and animated by a smile of the softest pleasure, which gleamed through the long silken lashes that swept the carnation of her blushing cheek. Her dress, snowy and transparent, was the robe of fancy, arranged by the hand of modesty; her looped-up sleeves revealed a fair slender arm that Praxiteles might have taken for a model

when he sculptured his Venus, which Cos would not resign to ransom herself from debt. Full-blown roses were mingled in her bright auburn hair, and pearl encircled her neck.

Unconsciously to himself the glow of a too vivid admiration kindled on the cheek, and beamed in the dark eyes of Seeton. His only safety was flight, but he had not the courage, perhaps not the virtue, for such a sacrifice; and he handed her into the carriage, and seated himself opposite to her, with a silent ecstasy, that was more eloquent than the most florid language, and more dangerous, both to him who felt and she who inspired it. That silence is like the sultry repose of a summer's day—the feelings expand and luxuriate under its influence; the deep waters are ever the most still, it is the shallow brook that bubbles in its course.

The ball room was already crowded when they entered. The beauty so peculiar to Wales abundantly met the eye, and good humour and hilarity appeared the presiding spirits of the evening. Dancing had already commenced, for Caroline could not so far forget her town habits as to come early; but Malcolm Noel was disengaged; he met them, conducted them to Mrs. Annesley, and while she was expressing her sense of the honour she received in the company of Miss Auber, and her brother, he endeavoured to secure Adela for a partner. He was not surprised to find her pre-engaged, and with his usual presence of mind, obtained her promise of the *reversion* of her hand after the two next dances, and then taking a place by her side entered on topics of general con

versation. Mr. Auber sat on the other side, but in so much silence that Adela inquired if he was ill.

"Not so perfectly at ease as I expected to be," he replied, but added, perceiving a shadow steal over the brightness of her brow, "'tis perhaps the effect of possessing too much, rather than wanting any thing."

Adela had experienced the effect of this exuberance of pleasure too sensitively not to immediately understand what he implied, and she sweetly and ingenuously confessed her delight that his silence was not attributable to any other cause.

"That unfortunate accident," she exclaimed, "will ever be a subject of my regret, scarcely less deep than my gratitude, since besides subjecting you to much pain, it has invaded all the pleasures which you might otherwise have enjoyed in this romantic this beautiful country."

"Pardon me," he replied, "in purchasing for me these sweet acknowledgments it has far over-paid any pain I may have suffered through it."

But Seeton vainly struggled against the depression that came like a cloud upon his spirits, perhaps it was indisposition, for he was really ill; perhaps it was some feelings of incipient jealousy which the neighbourhood of Mr. Noel excited.

Malcolm was in high spirits, and his sense and intelligence evidently gained the attention of Miss Belmont. In spite of prejudice, which like a serpent already began to insinuate itself in the breast of Seeton, he could not but admire the justness of idea; and nervous language in which Malcolm spoke; the evident result of an elevated course of study, and su-

perior cultivation: so much do the ideas and language take their character from our pursuits, as the honey of the Abyssinian bees retains both the hue and fragrance of the flower of the *Bohabah* tree from which it is drawn.

Caroline had been round the room on the arm of young Mr. Annesley, who was the successor to his father's clerical functions; she now returned to her seat near her brother, and divined with her usual quickness the source of the chagrin visible in his countenance. It convinced her that Seeton was not so secure as he fancied himself, and for the sake of all parties she rejoiced in the addition of Malcolm Noel to their circle, it might weaken the influence her brother was but too likely to obtain in Adela's heart; and it might teach him not to usurp the place of one, who worthy and disengaged could offer her the honourable homage of his heart. When they stood up to dance, though sorry to observe Seeton's dejection, she could not resist the waggery that was the prevailing feature of her character, and she whispered in his ear a couplet of an old song—

"It is good to be merry and wise,
It is well to be honest and true,
It is best to be off with the *old* love,
Before we are on with the *new*."

And then giving her hand to Mr. Annesley, she took her place. But Seeton Auber forgot chagrin, pain, and every other ill as he gazed on the beautiful being whose hand he held, who, with a "shape like to the

angels," went down the dance as if borne up with invisible wings.

When compelled to resign her to Malcolm he did not seek another partner, but seated himself to follow with fascinated eyes, her lovely figure through the mazes of the dance. He fancied she had lost a share of the spirits that had animated her in the preceding part of the evening, that a listlessness mingled in her graceful movements, that a sombre pensiveness had succeeded to the ever varying blush that mantled on her cheek while dancing with him, and a glow of internal satisfaction involuntarily suffused itself over his heart.

As they were returning to their seats, Caroline whispered Adela, to refuse Seeton if he wished to dance again, adding she was certain he was not equal to it, and would afterwards feel the ill effects.

She was scarcely seated when Auber, fearful that the prize would be again ravished from him, begged her hand for the next dances. He scarcely believed the evidence of his own senses as he listened to her refusal which, given under feelings of regret, was given with a gravity he could not comprehend, and restrained by the presence of Malcolm, she forebore to express her reasons. At that moment Mr. Annesley advanced, saying his mother wished to speak to her; and leaning on the arm of that gentleman, and followed by Malcolm, she left Seeton heart-struck with surprise and disappointment.

With the quick apprehension of alarmed love he attributed her air of melancholy while dancing with

Mr. Noel, not as he had at first fondly imagined, to regret at changing her partner, but to the reception of a new impression. The night was advancing—

> "The moonshine stealing through the gloom
> Blended with the tints of eve."

And to indulge reflection undisturbed, Seeton left the ball room, and wandered into the garden. It was extensive, and laid out with considerable taste, but that which particularly attracted his attention was a small marble cenotaph to the memory of the late Mr. Annesley; it was a record of his virtues, and an evidence of those of his son who had raised it. Shaded by an aged yew, and surrounded by cypress trees, it seemed to invite the melancholy Auber, it accorded so well with the "gloomy habit" of his soul; leaning therefore on the monument, he stood wrapped in thought, regardless of the baneful effects of the cypresses, surcharged as they were with the dews of evening, or the still more fatal influence of the sudden change from a heated room to a moist atmosphere.

The dancing recommenced, Adela returned to her place, and Mr. Noel finding her determined not to dance any more, led out Miss Auber, while Mr. Annesley took the vacant seat by the side of Adela. He was a young man of the most timid manners, but truly fitted by the virtues of his heart, and the purity of his life to be a teacher of God's word. His person was genteel and his countenance prepossessing, but being very pale, and very retiring, he never was a striking object in any circle, and it was not till he was well known that his value could be properly ap-

preciated. Young as he was, Adela beheld him with a species of veneration, partly a tribute to the holy office he filled, and partly to the strict manner in which he acted up to the sacred doctrines he professed.

But this evening his mild accents vainly courted the attention of the abstracted mind of Adela, whose eyes wandered round the room in vain pursuit of the absent Seeton Auber. Her colour faded, and by the time the dance was over, and Caroline again joined her, she complained of faintness, and expressed a wish to get into the air.

"What has become of my brother?" said Caroline to Mr. Annesley, whose arm Adela had accepted to leave the room.

"Indeed I do not know, but I will seek him if you wish," answered the young curate.

"O! pray do," cried Adela, hardly knowing what she said, "I feel much better now I am in the air, do not let us detain you."

Mr. Annesley bowed and returned to the house, and the ladies, invited by the beauty of the moonlight, proceeded down the garden. They were both silent, for each had their little hoard of thoughts, which dared not wander beyond the precincts of the fair bosoms in which they were cherished. The music and dancing had excited their feelings and imaginations, and the beauty of the night and surrounding scenery was calculated to prolong and at the same time to soothe the excitement.

At length chance led them to the cenotaph, but ere they yet approached it, a piercing shriek burst from

the lips of Adela, who springing forward sunk insensible on the extended form of Seeton, who was stretched before the monument—

> "Cold as the marble where his length was laid,
> Pale as the beam that on his features play'd."

The shriek of Adela, and the voice of Caroline, recalled the senses of Mr. Auber, and in a few minutes Mr. Noel, Mr. Annesley, and many of the visitors accompanied with servants bearing lights, alarmed by the shriek which they had heard from the garden, hastened to the spot. Malcolm raised Adela in his arms and carried her into the house, while Mr. Annesley assisted by others supported Mr. Auber. A glass of cold water restored Miss Belmont, though she still trembled excessively from the effects of the dreadful fright she had been seized with; but Mr. Auber had hurt his arm in his fall, and it was found necessary to send for Mr. Bentham. As soon as that gentleman arrived he said that it would be highly improper for Mr. Auber to attempt returning home, and Mrs. Annesley declaring there was a bed at his service he was immediately removed to it; and half an hour after, having recommended him to the friendly care of the Annesley family, and left Saville in attendance, Caroline and Miss Belmont drove home, with sunk and exhausted spirits. When they reached the cottage, the former would not alight, but setting Adela down, sent in her love to Mrs. Belmont, and drove on, not without some apprehensions at meeting her father, against whose express wish they had gone to this "bumpkin ball," as he termed it.

Thus ended this eventful day, which had been anticipated with so much delight, and had commenced with so much brilliancy. With what different feelings did Adela disengage the ornaments from her person at night, to those with which she had assumed them in the morning! She sunk upon her pillow with an aching head, but sleepless eyes, while fears for Seeton, whose pale face was ever before her, chilled her heart with apprehension.



## CHAPTER VI.

"—Beneath the moonlight shade
In sighs to pour his soften'd soul
The midnight mourner strayed." MALLET.

It was some days before Mr. Auber could leave the Annesley's, and when he did it was not without feelings and expressions of the liveliest gratitude for the hospitable attentions and unremitted kindness with which he had been treated.

He had desired the coachman to stop at Mrs. Belmont's, but as he reached the door, he observed Mr. Noel at the parlour window, and ordering the man to drive on, he sunk back in the coach from which he did not again look out till he arrived at his father's.

The arrival of Adela some hours after to spend the evening with Caroline restored all his wonted spirits and his usual graces. The very evident pleasure with which she met him, the fears which her conversation betrayed she had suffered on his account, again flattered him with the assurance of the interest he held in her breast, and which with the sophistry so common to human nature, while he professed he should use no efforts to win, he was miserable if he did not obtain.

They talked of their proposed journey to London, the period for which was now rapidly advancing, Mr. Auber having been in Wales above a fortnight. Adela's heart palpitated with pleasure at the expectation, though the thought of the parting with her mother immediately after panged it with regret.

Captain Auber, who had been reconciled to the project of Adela's visit to London, and in high spirits from the receipt of letters, and the maturing of certain projects, wore this evening an appearance of such gentle urbanity, that only those who had witnessed it, could conceive him capable of the violence of anger. Neither was he insensible to the charms of Miss Belmont, whose fascinations renewed in him that spirit of gallantry, which he imagined he had left, with all the other attributes of his fashionable life, in the meridian of London. She was a being who could not be beheld without interest; and though Captain Auber's feelings had been long seared and obtunded by the heartless intercourse of the world, he never spent an hour in her society without feeling the influence she gained over him.

Time flew on rapid wings, the last rays of the sun had sunk unmarked behind the hills, and the pale moon had long been abroad, when Adela, in compliance with a promise that she had made her mother, whom she had left indisposed, rose to take leave. Never did Seeton assist to shawl a lady with more grace, (though having but one arm for the service,) with more tenderness, with more pleasure, for the hope of being her escort enabled him to bear her early departure without a murmur. As soon as he heard the carriage drive to the door he desired the servant to bring his hat, gloves, and roquelaure, but his father countermanded the order, and called for his own, observing he would himself have the honour of seeing Miss Belmont safe home, and paying his respects to her mother.

Seeton's brilliancy was eclipsed in a moment, but having so recently made his peace, he did not wish to cause a new rupture by shewing any opposition to his father's will, he therefore submitted with what grace he could, and contented himself with attending them to the carriage.

Captain Auber felt some triumph as he seated himself, for he had other views than the pleasure of attending Adela home, or of seeing her mother, which soon evinced itself in the following conversation; though Adela was far from penetrating the motives that instigated it.

"Well, my sweet Miss Belmont," began her politic and courtier-like companion, "you will soon become acquainted with other members of my family, and

you must candidly tell me what you think of them, for I am greedy of your opinion."

"I could already do that by anticipation," replied Adela, "those I have the happiness of knowing at present, enable me to form an estimate of those I am yet to see."

"You will see one at least whose open and ingenuous nature will be sure to win your esteem," resumed the Captain, "and that is my son Frederic. Do you not smile at the weakness of parental fondness, as you hear me exult, as I am too apt to do in my children?"

"Yes, sir, I smile, but it is in joy at your happiness, in sympathy with your admiration," replied the fair listener.

"I could expect no other of your gentle nature. Yes, my charming Miss Belmont, I am indeed a happy father, for nature has not only been lavish of her gifts to my children, but fortune appears anxious to shower her favours on them, which makes me the less regret the late deterioration of my own circumstances."

"O! my dear sir," cried Adela with enthusiasm, "you might exclaim as did the mother of the *Gracchi*, 'These are the only jewels I can boast,' and feel a glory in such poverty beyond what the wealth of worlds could confer."

"I presume," cried the Captain, with a supercilious smile, which Adela could not see, "Cornelia is one of your Roman favourites."

"I must own," she answered, "a woman who could reject a monarch's love, for that of a private

citizen, is a character that excites my enthusiastic admiration."

"Ah! my dear young lady, it is a very pretty theory," cried the Captain, "and sounds very well in a poem, or a tragedy; but tried by the standard of worldly wisdom, she had done far better in marrying the monarch. She would have been happier as the regal mother of princes, than as the parent of the seditious rebels she gave birth to."

"I cannot subscribe to your opinion," rejoined Adela, "a soul like Cornelia's had felt more happy, had been prouder of Tiberius and Caius in their graves, than of less illustrious children though seated on the throne of empire."

"There then we remain at issue, and you will not sympathize in my joy at the proud prospects of my sons. It all arises from the difference of habits and education, had you been reared in the world you would have thought differently, have formed different estimates."

"Perhaps so," said Adela with some coldness.

"I know the value, my sweet Adela," resumed the Captain, "of wealth and distinction, and therefore labour to attain it for my children. Here is Seeton," he continued in the easy tone of friendly confidence, "in marrying Miss Egremont, steps into the possession of a magnificent fortune, and large expectations, it will ally him to some of the first families in the kingdom, whose interest will obtain him a seat in parliament, and lay open the way to the highest honours of the state."

The Captain paused, but Adela made no reply; this was information that penetrated her heart like a poisoned dagger, she spoke no more the rest of the way, and he went on again uninterruptedly—

"If Frederic fulfils my hopes in forming a union with Miss Melville, my dearest wishes as it regards my sons will be fulfilled. She will bring him fortune, connection, and professional interest."

Their arrival at Mrs. Belmont's put a stop to a conversation, that had become insupportable to Adela, and it appeared the only thing that could arrest the Captain's loquacity.

On entering the parlour, Adela was surprised at again seeing Mr. Noel, who had taken his leave before she departed for the Aubers', and from whom she had carefully concealed she was going thither, lest he should offer to attend her. Her mother, as was the case when engaged in conversation that interested her, was brilliant with animation.

"I have had the honour," cried Captain Auber, as he entered, "of attending Miss Belmont home myself, in order to ascertain with perfect certainty the state of your health. I am charmed to find you looking so well."

"There is my physician," cried she, waving her white hand towards Malcolm, and then putting it in the Captain's.

"My dear lady you have some fever," cried he, in a voice of the kindest concern. "I would counsel you to attend to this indisposition in time."

"You would certainly have been at the head of the

faculty, Captain Auber," cried Mrs. Belmont, laughing, "had you been bred a physician. What perversity it was to destine you to give wounds instead of healing them."

"If the power of wounding were to confer rank in the army, I should now be bowing to a field marshal," replied the Captain, in a tone of gaiety corresponding with her own.

Soon after this he kissed hands and returned to his carriage, and never did Adela see a departure with more pleasure; though she could not exactly define to herself in what he had offended her. Her mother and Mr. Noel resumed their conversation, with eager interest; the subject was Italy, and Adela was at no loss to account for the vivid interest and pensive pleasure that by turns glowed in her mother's countenance.

The decline of Mrs. Belmont's beauty was like the sunset of her clime. Age seemed reluctant to throw his shadow on a form "so brilliant once, and once so fair:" but though Time, who suffers no infraction, had in a degree yielded the fair fabric of her beauty to the despoiler, he had as yet had no power over her mind: that burned in all its primeval lustre, and emitted a radiance that at once dazzled and delighted the young enthusiast who listened to her.

The greatest weakness of her mind, if it ought to be so termed, was her exclusive attachment to Italy: there was a sublime, yet mild enthusiasm in her devotion to it, and the sweet melancholy that stole over her feature when she reverted to her native

Florence, gave her a charm more touching than even her youthful vivacity in all its pristine brilliancy could have done.

"Mr. Belmont," cried she, casting down her eyes surcharged with the tears of memory, "loved Florence, and had his intentions been realized we should have returned thither; melancholy was our farewell, how often have

'We wept when we remembered Zion.'"

The pathos of her tones, woke corresponding feelings in the breasts of her young auditors. Adela forgot, as she gradually entered into the spirit that animated her mother's language, the feelings of mortification and displeasure with which she had returned home. Losing her own identity, she became in turns the patriot, the exile, the mistress, the mourner, as her mother eloquently painted her feelings in all those characters: while the burning cheek, and beaming eye attested for the youthful Malcolm, the ardent interest that held his soul spell-bound.

It was late when he departed—so difficult had he found it, so unwilling had he been, to break the fascination that held him. It was a glorious night, the reposing scenery, lit by the placid radiance of a cloudless moon, spoke a sublime but silent language, that accorded well with the impressions he had brought from Mrs. Belmont's. The grandeur of the mountains, the magnificence of the firmament called forth the aspirations of a mind deeply imbued with the purest, and at the same time the most elevated ideas of religion and virtue. His step was slow and noise-

less, he seemed to fear to break the magic by a sound; when he was recalled from his flights, grand and sublime as the objects that had excited them, by observing a figure, wrapt in a long dark cloak, turn an angle of the path before him and suddenly disappear.

The spell was broken, his former ideas like frighted birds flew away, and that very common, every-day feeling, curiosity, took their place—and quickening his pace he pursued the vision. He caught view of it again among the trees—it made rapid way, but he gained upon it. Yet suddenly recollecting that he had no right to intrude himself on the stranger, whoever he might be, he stopped, and then turned in another direction, though not without some inquisitive hankerings to know more of the unknown; and his imagination taking up the subject, pursued him under various forms. Perhaps he was a misanthrope who wandered at night because he loved not to meet mankind; as such, thought Malcolm, "I have done well to avoid him. Perhaps he labours under that starless, moonless midnight of the mind,—despair, and breathes to the still ear of nature, the bursting sighs of agony. Perhaps he is a Spanish refugee, and, like my fair Florentine, mourns o'er the memory of days for ever fled, and scenes for ever lost." The more he thought, the more his interest deepened. When, as if in reward of the restraint he had put upon his curiosity, he suddenly met the stranger: they both started—Malcolm bowed; the stranger returned it, and passed on. In that short moment the penetrating eye of Malcolm had read the being who so strongly excited his ima-

gination. His figure was tall, his air elegant, his face pale as monumental marble, melancholy and expressive, and his eyes sunk and hollow. The young Caledonian looked after him, and traced in his slow and heavy tread, and the drooping of his head upon his bosom, a mind oppressed with sorrow, and sunk in dejection; and with the prompt benevolence of a heart the world had not yet chilled, he burned to pursue him and offer him the aids and consolations of friendship. Full of these thoughts he returned home, and retired to bed, where visions of Florence, Mrs. Belmont, and the stranger, mingled in his dreams.

Early the next morning, joined by his uncle Mr. Annesley, who was a very few years older than himself, he set out on a visit to some relations in the adjacent county of Denbighshire; for as far as relations went Malcolm was as rich as Crassus. Whole legions of cousins both in Scotland and Wales claimed kindred with him, and the task of visiting all those he possessed in the latter country, promised not to be a short one.

Arrived at the habitation of Richard Wingregin, Esq. he soon found himself surrounded by that old gentleman, his three blooming daughters, and their brother Alfred, who by the bye, from some cause or other, looked as melancholy as his royal namesake may be supposed to have done when he was exiled in Athelney.

Having done great justice to the viands spread by the hospitable hand of plenty before them, and listened with patience to some dozen of old stories from

Mr. Wingregin, and as many hundred questions from the fair sisters, a party was made to show Malcolm the Abbey of Valle Crucis—of all the antiquities of Wales, perhaps the finest that remains.

Mr. Noel, with Miss Elizabeth Wingregin on one side, and Miss Margaret Wingregin on the other, brought up the rear of the party, of which Mr. Alfred Wingregin with a young Chester lady led the van. Mr. Annesley supported the rotundant form of a Mrs. Griffiths, one of that family to whom Malcolm had heard his grandmother allude, while on his other side tripped the remaining daughter of their host.

There was certainly more mirth than elegance in this party, especially as they ascended the steep mountain that led to the ruin of Castle Dinas, which was their first place of destination; but every deficiency of grace was supplied by good nature, and though with an imagination highly sensible of the first, Malcolm had too kindly a heart not to expand to the latter whenever he encountered it.

Castle Dinas had once been a strong place, and still presented many vestiges of its ancient powers of resistance; but the party not feeling inclined to stop, Malcolm suffered himself to be hurried on, intending on some future occasion and with more suitable companions to make a visit of observation.

In their course to the ruin of Valle Crucis (distant about two miles,) Malcolm discovered another *bevy* of cousins, who having loaded him with caresses, and entertained them with such a hasty repast as his party felt inclined to partake, joined in the excursion, to the

number of half a dozen, so that the ruin soon rung with the echoing of footsteps, and the shrill tones of numerous female voices.

They had not penetrated far into the Abbey when Malcolm started at observing the stranger of the preceding night standing at some distance sketching. "He is an artist and certainly a foreigner," thought young Noel. At that moment Mr. Annesley turned round to him exclaiming—

"What an interesting figure is that yonder! how fine a head; but how deep an expression of melancholy for so young a countenance!"

"I have been observing him some time," replied Noel. "I should much like to get acquainted with him."

"That is a wish not easy of accomplishment, I fancy," rejoined the other, "for you see he has already given up his task and avoids us."

"I am not surprised at that," cried Malcolm, "this giggling assemblage must but ill accord with his feelings. I shall separate myself from them at the first convenient opportunity, for probably I shall never meet an occasion more favourable for forming an acquaintance with him, if indeed we ever meet again and I feel an indescribable interest in him."

But Malcolm's efforts were unavailing, the stranger had eluded him, and he returned in the evening to Mr. Wingregin more vexed at his disappointment, than pleased with his excursion, and would gladly have persuaded Mr. Annesley to return home that night. But it is not so easy to escape out of the hands of country cousins, having once got into them; and he was

forced to submit to be killed with kindness for three days before he could make good his retreat into Caernarvonshire.

With new interest, with new delight from the absence of a few days, he hastened to Mrs. Belmont, and found her in the first newness of her grief for the loss of Adela, who had that morning taken her departure for London, accompanied by the Aubers. All the fears that the first view of the event had presented to her mind, now thronged thick and fast upon it in stronger and more alarming colours. Mr. Noel, who had none of the lightness and levity that so frequently characterizes youth, was a seasonable relief to her anxious and exhausted spirits, and led on by the similarity of mind which invited confidence, she went from one subject of interest to another, till she had detailed to him the early interest of her life. While Adela is pursuing her journey to London, we will take a sketch from this conversation.

Mrs. Belmont was, as has already been remarked, a Florentine. She had been destined for the seclusion of a convent, a fate from which she gladly flew into the arms of Horatio Belmont, the beauty of whose person captivated her fancy, and the ardour and eloquence of whose love won her heart. He was one of those who voluntarily cast themselves out of the lap of fortune. A series of imprudences had estranged him from his home, and alienated the affections of the paternal bosom. The sloping path that leads to ruin is unfortunately trod with a fatal facility, and there were not wanting those who urged Belmont's headlong descent by lending him the arm of apparent

friendship and companionship, but who quitted him at the end of the race, and proclaimed as crimes what at the utmost were but follies; yet with all this Belmont was no inactive agent of his own destruction, and had his enemies been fewer, less active and less artful, he would still have contrived to divert the stream of fortune from himself.

A voluntary and reckless outcast from his country, with no dependance but his talent, and the anticipation of future expectations, he married Isabelle Vicenzi, as much pleased by the romance of the adventure, as the beauty of his bride. Their marriage had been private, it was not therefore till Mrs. Belmont promised to become a mother that they thought of flight; but when they did, a peculiar concurrence of circumstances arose to impede it. Belmont was a prisoner, and his wife thrust from her paternal home gave birth to her first-born in a dungeon.

The interference of an English nobleman, to whom he was known, procured Belmont his liberty on condition of his immediate departure from Florence. But no effect of British power and benevolence could avert the machinations of Italian vengeance, to which, probably as the most ready and effectual means of reaching their parents, their child fell a sacrifice. On their return from the tribunal, which both had been obliged to attend, the remains of their child, the victim, it was pleaded, of accident, was presented to them; but burnt almost to a cinder, it was in vain they sought a trait by which to ascertain its identity.

To bow to the inscrutable decrees of fate, to submit to the iron rod of power, was all that remained to

them; to appeal was as vain as to lament, and Belmont after an estrangement of many years returned to his native country. His father was dead, and had willed away to a distant branch all that he could so dispose of; the rest was irretrievably involved: a new claimant held the place he had once expected to fill after the death of a childless uncle, and too indolent to undertake a systematic investigation of that which he knew to be complicated, and feared would be tedious, he gave up his claim. Besides his opponent was rich and he was poor; under those circumstances he should engage his enemy at a fearful disadvantage: neither had he the stimulant which children might have given him, for whose sakes he might have made efforts, which no considerations for self could induce, Mrs. Belmont bringing him no children for many years.

In the exertion of the talent nature had given him, Belmont sought a refuge from the ills of poverty and the corrodings of a disappointed and repentant spirit; but it never did more than as he himself expressed it, just enable him "to keep his head above water." Nature and fortune were ever rivals, and the being whom the former has adorned and gifted, is generally the one whom the latter most neglects and persecutes. Belmont was an evidence of the truth of a remark which the history of genius every where attests, though candour must confess that the waywardness of his temper also contributed to bar his progress to prosperity. The same spirit that had rendered him obnoxious to the government of Florence, infused itself into his writings at home, and though it did not sub-

ject him to captivity and incarceration, it was not without its baneful influence; and thus he still continued to deteriorate rather than promote his fortune.

The political tenets he adopted took their complexion from the disappointments he had met in life. To such a source may often be traced the spirit that actuates the popular demagogue. Self-love is the axle on which opinion moves: the fortunate man is perfectly satisfied with all the institutions of society, and feels no desire for the repeal of abuses that do not affect him; while the unfortunate churlishly refuses to acknowledge the advantages and benefits that have failed to extend their influence to his fate.

At length, after many vicissitudes, Belmont thought he would seek in retirement, that peace which his restless nature had hitherto denied him in the busy and varying scenes of the world. He took up his abode in Conway Vale, where the fond and gentle sharer of his fluctuating fortune, in a few months after their establishment, gave birth to Adela.

Nothing was less suited to Belmont's character and habits than the solitude into which he had thrown himself:, it invaded his health and sapped his spirits. But he soon wanted the courage, as much as the means to return to the world, where he knew his failing powers would awaken the glow of triumph in those who could neither forgive his superiority, nor forget his severity. Year followed year, and he felt more strongly in each that succeeded, that his mortal course was drawing to close; and though for himself he did not wish to arrest the remorseless creditor, whose chilling hand was already on him, for the gentle

sharer of his many sorrows, for the lovely offspring of their mutual love, he wished there had been more sand in the glass. With the approach of death it is natural to suppose, we lose much of the strength and energy of character; and Belmont, like a stately oak seared and scathed in many a sterm, waited but the next to overthrow him. That soon arrived: disappointment in the reception of a work, which he fondly hoped would have considerably increased the very humble inheritance of his daughter, was the final blow. He had totally lost the happy power of looking forward, for reasoning from analogy he had nothing to expect from the future; and the past, the fatal past presented too many golden opportunities weakly lost, too many errors to lament. He felt all was over, all was irretrievable; he committed his child and her sweet mother to the care of Providence, and felt glad—

"To lay him in his mother earth and be at rest."

The sole remaining tie then left the mourning heart of Mrs. Belmont was her child, at that period just entering her ninth year. Long estranged both by distance and disobedience from her native friends, she wanted courage, had she even possessed means to seek a reconciliation; but her limited resources were alone sufficient to preclude such an idea. Belmont had been an only child, therefore his ties of consanguinity were few and distant, and imbued with the bitterest enmity against him: so that uninvited by any prospect of improving her daughter's fate; nay fearful that a change might only serve to rob her

of her last remaining blessing—peace; she determined to pass the remainder of her life in Conway Vale, and have the melancholy consolation of knowing she should sleep again in Belmont's bosom, when death should hush into cold unconsciousness like his the pulses of her heart.

Adela's education, which had once been the common pleasure of both her parents, after her father's death became the sole and darling occupation of Mrs. Belmont's life. Thus her native beauty was aided by all the graces of cultivation: though secluded from the world, she possessed all those accomplishments that embellish manners, with this additional advantage, that she had not sacrificed in the acquirement of them the innocence and purity of her mind. When she danced, it was for pleasure and exercise, and the joyous spirit that sparkled in her eyes, the carnation that heightened on her cheek, was the pure and eloquent blood of a taintless heart, a stranger to the palpitations of vanity; and ignorant of the science of display, she sung and played with taste and feeling, and knew nothing of that silly ambition, which devoted to execution, forgets in rapid and difficult movements, the superior graces of pathos and expression. Though mistress of her own and the French languages, her mother, led by the love of her country, and encouraged by the corresponding taste of Belmont, had chiefly familiarized her with the writers of Italy; and while she was a stranger to the current events, and mutations, civil and political, of existing things, she was well acquainted with all that was most memorable and striking in ancient history.

Her mother, who on her marriage had embraced the Protestant faith (another bar to her reconciliation with her family, all bigots in the faith she had apostatized) had reared Adela, in those doctrines, and in her system of morality had endeavoured to inculcate the strictest obedience to parental authority, and the most refined delicacy, as the surest safeguards of female virtue. But in her plan of education Mrs. Belmont had committed one great error, she had cultivated Adela's feelings and imagination to a dangerous height. The effort should rather have been to strengthen her judgment, than to refine her fancy; to subdue and regulate, rather than to heighten her native sensibility; to inculcate that common sense which brings the virtues into daily practice, instead of indulging an enthusiasm which wasted itself on fanciful theories of poetical philosophy—a philosophy which like the wings of Icarus, fails us at the moment we have most need of it, and like them it raises us to a temporary elevation only to make our fall greater and more fatal.

## CHAPTER VII.

"Ah! me, I feel
A shivering horror run through all my powers!
O! I am nought but tumult, fears, and weakness!
And yet how idle fear when hope is gone,
Gone, gone for ever." THOMSON.

Of the party that occupied the post-chaise that was to carry Adela to London, every member was busied with thoughts that they would not for the world have discovered to their companions: so that had they, according to the fanciful idea of some one, had a window in their breast, the curtain would most certainly have been carefully drawn.

Captain Auber had not been slow to perceive the mutual impression that Adela and Seeton had received, nor a little alarmed at the probable consequences of such an attachment. Anger had at first taken possession of his heart, and induced some violence towards his son, and some coldness towards the Belmonts; but a little reflection led him to see the futility of such a procedure, which might tend to ripen what it was meant to blight. Having recourse then to a policy, which nothing but excited and strong emotion could disarrange, he determined on a different line of conduct. On the mind of Adela he impressed his son's engagement, and his own abhorence

of unequal matches, and the implacable severity with which he should visit such aberrations in his children: while into the mind of Seeton he insinuated, too artfully for him to perceive the design, that Malcolm Noel had conceived a passion for Miss Belmont, which she gave every indication of favouring. This idea had suggested itself to his mind on the evening he had conducted her home, and found the young Scotchman there. In his first flush of displeasure he had also thought of preventing Adela's journey to London, but besides the difficulty of so doing without making a rupture with Mrs. Belmont, from whom he had received much polite attention during his residence in Wales; he readily foresaw that Seeton would in that case probably find himself too ill to travel, he should be obliged to accompany Caroline himself, and thus the enemy would be left in full possession of the field. The Captain might truly be said to be engaged on the preventive service, for though his health was not quite equal to the journey, nor his presence absolutely necessary at the expected wedding, his anxieties respecting the introduction of Miss Belmont to his son Frederic induced him to undertake it, for Seeton once in London, surrounded by Miss Egremont and her friends, would become less the object of his solicitude and fears. Arranging therefore his plans, and balancing the various circumstances that might either favour or oppose them, he did not break the silence which every one seemed determined religiously to observe for the first twenty miles of the journey.

Mr. Auber looked forward to his approaching meeting with the Egremonts with any thing but pleasure,

and strove, as he every now and then glanced at the tear-traced cheek and languid eyes of Adela, to ascertain whether the greater portion of her melancholy in leaving Wales, sprung from parting with her mother, or resigning the attentions of Mr. Noel.

Of Adela's meditations it would be difficult to speak definitely, for at every turn they took as many different hues and appearances as a kaleidoscope could have presented. One moment her heart fluttered with pleasing expectations and undefined hopes, the next they faded and left all gloom and incertitude.

Caroline had her sources of reflection on which, however, we have no right to intrude, as she had hitherto kept them to herself. The travellers gradually became more bri liant, yet none were sorry when the long journey of many days ended by the post-chaise stopping at Sir Hubert Auber's in Russel Square.

It was late in the evening when they arrived, and the blazing windows of the drawing room announced an assemblage of the brilliant and the beautiful. The baronet was no sooner apprized of their arrival than he hastened to greet them, as did soon after Emilia and Lady Auber. The gentlemen suffered themselves to be conducted to the drawing room, the Captain trusting to his age to plead his excuse for appearing in his travelling dress, and Seeton to his empty sleeve, which his cousin assured him only gave him the appearance of a wounded officer.

Caroline and Adela retired to Emilia's dressing room, where there was a fire, for it was one of the cold evenings of our capricious climate; and tea being

brought in, they soon forgot fatigue in the comforts that surrounded them.

"What think you of my cousin?" said Caroline, as soon as she left them to return to the drawing room.

"She is a perfect Auber," replied Adela, "very beautiful, and very elegant."

"On my honour we are much indebted to you for that compliment, permit me to curtsey for the whole family."

An hour had scarcely elapsed when a servant brought a note to Caroline, which she smiled while perusing, and then handed it to Adela. It ran thus:—

"*The humble petition of a very worthy individual to the ladies of the dressing room,*

"Sheweth,

"That your petitioner full of deep devotion to the sex, brotherly love to one, and respect and friendship by anticipation to the other of the fair recluses, solicits admission for a few moments to be limited or extended according to their mercy or his merits, from five to twenty minutes.

"That your petitioner, a voluntary exile from the drawing-room, is waiting in a solitary ante-chamber his doom, and therefore trusts his case will be taken into early consideration.

"That your petitioner can furnish the most irrefragable testimonials of his modest worth and retiring excellence, and therefore he trusts ear will be given to the prayer of his petition."

"We must admit him," said Caroline, perceiving Adela had finished reading the paper; and turning to the servant who waited, continued, "Inform Mr. Frederic Auber we shall be happy to see him."

In a few moments the door again opened and the youthful Frederic presented himself, and Caroline having introduced him to Miss Belmont, flew into his arms with warmer demonstrations of affection and delight than Adela had ever before seen her evince.

Frederic, dressed in a gay and elegant uniform, was all his brother had described him. His light hair and blue eyes, added to the slenderness of his figure, gave him an extremely youthful appearance and an ingenuous openness of countenance, and careless ease of manner appeared the evidences of his generous, but thoughtless nature.

"Every body in town, I suppose?" inquired Miss Auber after they had quietly taken their seats.

"I never remember the town fuller," replied her brother, "or more brilliant."

"I am glad of that," rejoined Caroline, "for I want to make this mountain nymph see and admire the world."

"I will not answer how far you may succeed in that," replied Frederic while he gazed with undisguised admiration on the beautiful face of Adela, "but that the world will return the compliment to an extent fatal to its peace, I already feel. What an unpropitious destiny was mine, that did not substitute me for Secton in this happy errand of fetching you from Wales."

"Apropos!" exclaimed Caroline, "how is Sophia?"

"O! perfectly well, as fond and as silly as ever. I expected to see her spring into Seeton's arms the moment he entered the drawing room."

"What, is she below?"

"Yes, and his lordship too; when I came away, I left Seeton doing penance between them, answering inquiries *ad infinitum* about his broken arm, and anti-brilliant looks. By Jupiter, he looks the very ghost of himself; I told Miss Egremont, as I passed her, to mark the ravages absence had made, and she looked so fond and so pathetically upon him, that I expected to see her like a dying swan pour forth a melting strain and expire upon his bosom."

"This is your old spirit of ridicule," cried Caroline, when Frederic's ringing laugh had subsided.. "Shall I tell you the secret of it; the actuating principle not only of your own breast, but of every man in the world? You can't bear to see any body loved but yourself. Was her tenderness directed to you, it would be all proper enough."

"I beg your pardon. I should thank no woman for a love that made me appear ridiculous."

"There again," interrupted his sister. "I by myself, I! self, self, is the idol of idolatry with all the male monsters; and those excite their contempt who most deserve their gratitude. Seeton, however, I trust is an exception."

"I trust he is!" cried Frederic, with mock gravity: "If love can make him happy, Sophia will give him enough of it, for she'll not suffer him a moment out

of her sight now she has recovered him. O! I fancy I hear her tender maudlin reproaches; but she'll improve vastly after they are married, doubtless."

Adela, who had been apparently amusing herself with looking over a portfolio of very minute and beautiful drawings, but in fact listening with a heart-sickening attention to the foregoing conversation, felt the faintness she had endeavoured to parry overcome her. She rose from her seat in the hope of dissipating it, but unable to stand she would have fallen to the ground if Frederic had not caught her,—all was the work of a moment. Caroline flew to the bell, while Frederic pressed to his bosom the fair form that reposed insensibly in his arms. Her hair loosed from its confining braids fell in profusion over her bosom and shoulders, while the long dark lashes that fringed her white lids, and the fine brow that arched above them formed a striking contrast to the death-like paleness that pervaded her lovely features.

The servants busied and distracted by the number of the guests that at that moment thronged the mansion, either did not hear the dressing room bell, or mistaking it, attended elsewhere. Caroline rung again and again, at intervals essaying what she could to restore Adela, while Frederic swore to annihilate every servant in the house.

At length they appeared, and at length a faint colour streamed into the cheek of Adela, and streaked her lips; but her eye opened without one ray of its accustomed light: it was a true reflector of the darkness that spread itself over her soul. She appeared

only half conscious, even when with a faint smile she replied to the kind inquiries of Caroline, for she did not withdraw herself from the sustaining arms of Frederic, and permitted him to support her to the apartments that had been prepared for her, where pressing her passive hand to his lips he reluctantly bade her good-night and resigned her to his sister, in the roguish light of whose eyes, in spite of her regret at the indisposition of Adela, might be read her anticipation of the result of this night's adventure.

Adela, who still seemed to gasp for breath, threw open the window which looked on to a spacious garden. Her recollection and self-command gradually returned as she inhaled the air that breathed from it, and assuring Miss Auber she felt better and wished to be alone, she at length succeeded in persuading Caroline to leave her.

Throwing aside the restraints of her evening dress, she assumed a wrapping gown, and with her hair still flowing about her shoulders paced up and down the apartment. Where was the calm that had once marked her evening devotions? she did not pray, alas she could not pray! for a sense of guilt and shame forbade her raising her eyes in an appeal to heaven. She felt with dreadful certainty that her heart was wholly devoted to one, whom she imagined was as wholly as irrevocably devoted to another, and to root the fatal prepossession from her soul was due alike to her honour and her peace. But Adela's virtue had its basis in feeling, not in principle: the latter would have taught her a vigorous effort of self-discipline, and

an adoption of those decisive measures by which the passion might ultimately (though at the expense of a painful struggle) have been irradicated. She chose rather to embrace the apparently easier alternative of hiding rather than chasing her love; and in the romantic fervour of her character, she exclaimed—

"O! Seeton, I will fly thee, with the first means that offers me an opportunity of escape. I will return to my wild and native home, and bear thy image in my breast to its unreproaching solitude. There will I shun the world, and waste my life in one long dream of thee. The undivided empire of my heart is thine —none, none shall ever share it!"

She put her hand to her bosom for his miniature which she had suspended round her neck on leaving home. It was gone! Great Heaven, the distraction of that moment! Had it been taken from her? Had she dropped it? Trembling at the idea of such a discovery, trembling at the idea of losing it, she snatched the candle from the toilet and hastened back to Emilia's dressing-room; one sole thought engrossed her mind, leaving her unconscious of her appearance, and unmindful whom she might encounter.

She reached the room, she pushed open the door, and entered; there was no one there—she hurried on with an eye wild with anxiety and inquiry, and beneath the chair she so lately occupied, she saw the miniature laying just as it had dropped from her neck in consequence of the breaking of the knot that fastened the ribbon. Snatching it up she hastened to retrace her steps, but though she had only to cross a

gallery, she was not destined to reach her room unseen. She had scarcely closed the door after her, when she heard some one exclaim in a voice of the most perfect astonishment—

"Is it possible? Miss Belmont!"

It was Seeton Auber; he was retiring to his chamber when her sudden appearance, like an apparition, arrested his attention. She was still deathly pale, and all the emotions that had agitated her heart during the evening were still visible in her countenance; while her white and flowing gown and dishevelled hair added to her singular and striking appearance.

The truant blood rushed to her cheek the moment she beheld him, and in her confusion and trepidation she dropped the miniature from her hand; he flew forward to snatch it up, but more rapid than light she anticipated the movement, and catching it up herself, was hastening to her room, when the soft deep tones of his voice, saying—

"Not one word to spare me!" induced her to turn. His hand was extended; her voice did not dare to utter a sound lest it should betray the emotion with which her heart palpitated, but the manner in which she placed her hand in his, unknowingly to herself betrayed the state of her feelings, far more than that could have done. In silent gratitude he raised it to his lips at the moment that the Captain entered the gallery. The light, the step, attracted the attention of both at the same moment; and they beheld the Captain standing as if rooted to the spot by unutterable surprise. Adela hastily withdrew her hand

and retreated into her room; and Seeton, not daring to meet his father, passed on to his. It is difficult to say to which of the three the circumstance occasioned the most uneasy sensations.



## CHAPTER VIII.

"Who could have thought the smile he wore,
When first we met would fade away;
Or that a chill would e'er come o'er
Those eyes so bright through many a-day." MOORE.

THE next morning Miss Belmont breakfasted in her own room and received an early visit from Caroline, who, persuaded that her indisposition chiefly arose from a morbid sensibility, forced her to descend to the back drawing-room where Lady Auber and her daughter, Sir Hubert and Frederic Auber were assembled.

The latter led her immediately to a seat, and taking one beside her, expressed in the most ardent manner his rapture at her renovated looks, for her native beauty and pure health triumphed over all the anxieties and disconcertions of the preceding night.

Sir Hubert Auber, who was a great admirer of beauty, and had no sons through whom, like his bro-

ther, he could be induced to behold Adela with alarm, soon drew a chair near her; and Adela, pleased to escape the pointed attention of Frederic, exerted herself to keep up a conversation with the baronet, who became increasingly pleased with her in proportion as she seemed pleased with him.

As for Lady Auber and the two cousins, they had so much to arrange about the approaching wedding, that they retired in close conference to the further end of the room, where from the importance of their looks it might have been imagined they were arranging the balance of power in Europe, only that from time to time, the words "silver lama," "white satin pelisse," "Brussels lace," &c. &c. became audible.

At length Caroline said aloud—

"What say you all to a ride in the park this lovely morning?"

"A drive you mean," said Lady Auber.

"No," replied Caroline, "Emilia and I prefer riding, and I know Miss Belmont is an excellent horsewoman."

"Pray excuse me," said Adela.

"Impossible!" interrupted Frederic whose countenance brightened at the proposition. It is a heavenly morning, and all the world will be there."

"Indeed, I prefer remaining at home," persisted Adela, "my bad spirits would invade your good humour."

"I will listen to no such nonsense," said Caroline. "You had your way in Wales, and used to walk me up hill and down dale till I wonder I ever survived it: now I shall retaliate and have my way in London;

so to the Park. you go, and on horseback too. Allons."

"But my dear Caroline, I have no habit," urged Adela.

"O! I can furnish you with one," hastily cried Emilia Auber. "We are so much of a size that I fancy mine will fit you exactly; which do you prefer, a green or a blue? But come with me to my room, and you will see."

"Fairly caught," cried Caroline, laughing. "You thought the want of a habit an excellent plea, did'nt you, Adela," and she tripped away to dress, while Frederic went to look after the horses.

In the course of an hour there was "mounting mid grooms" and chevaliers, for Lord Milsom had joined them, and Sir Hubert was as active as Frederic would permit him to be in assisting the ladies. The cavalcade left Russel Square in the following order:—Lord Milsom between Emilia and Caroline Auber. Frederic with Miss Belmont, and Sir Hubert and his lady in an open carriage.

The air which was refreshing, added to the exercise, soon heightened Adela's bloom, and the green habit she wore well became her figure and complexion. She rode with ease and grace, and Frederic entered the park with a triumph certainly pardonable in a youth of nineteen, as he felt what a well matched pair they were, and as he caught the looks of admiration that his fair companion excited; to whose account he placed many of the salutations he received, for he readily interpreted "Ah! Auber how d'ye do?" to "Ah! Auber who is that with you?"

In spite of the anxieties that corroded her spirits, Adela found herself amused; the number, the variety that surrounded her, the beauty of the weather, and the corresponding gaiety of every body; the attentions of Frederic, and the anecdotes and information which he related of those who kept continually passing and repassing, called forth some of her native cheerfulness; when the addition of Captain Auber to their party, who placed himself at her side, again filled her with anxiety and disconcertion. The circumstance of his seeing her in the gallery with Seeton recurred forcibly to her memory, appearances were so dreadfully against her, and yet how to vindicate herself she knew not. Whether designedly or otherwise, the Captain appeared to her a spy upon her actions, and no feeling is more painful than a consciousness of acting under the observation of another—it cramps all freedom and openness of conduct, and gives the most innocent actions the appearance of guilt.

Caroline turning round, and perceiving her father, fell back; suffering her cousin Emilia and Lord Milsom to proceed, managed to draw the Captain to her side and engage him in conversation. A look over her shoulder to Frederic soon after convinced Adela that this manœuvre was for his sake; but springing from whatever motive it might, Adela felt it as a relief, and she again looked round upon the scene, and made the observations it elicited with her usual flow of graceful language, and felicitous idea; while Frederic became every moment more fascinated with a being whose person, manners, voice, and character, harmonised so perfectly with all his preconceived

ideas of feminine loveliness. Delicacy in its most extensive sense, he held the surpassing charm of woman; and he had never yet met any so pre-eminently distinguished by it as Adela.

The prancing horse of a young lady of fine figure out masculine air attracted Adela's eye; Frederic followed the direction, and calmly observed—

"That is Miss Melville, and the gentleman by her side is Viscount Melville, her father, and my Colonel."

Adela recollecting the conversation she had once had with the Captain on the subject of his son's settlement in life, was not a little astonished at Frederic's apathy. Just as the idea was passing in her mind, the Captain turned round to his son, and with a voice of ill-suppressed displeasure, exclaimed—

"Why do you not fly to the assistance of Miss Melville?"

"Because sir, I have a lady under my protection, and there are plenty of gentleman who will hasten to her relief should there be any danger, which I at present see no reason to apprehend. She knows her horse."

"It will at least show attention," expostulated the Captain.

But it was all in vain, and Captain Auber had the mortification to see Oscar Finley, a young Irish officer, hasten to her relief, and then canter down the park by her side.

"What are we stopping for?" cried Frederic, for Lord Milsom and Emilia regulated the motions of the party.

"Miss Auber and his lordship have met some

friends, I imagine," said Adela, "it is a carriage full of ladies stops the way."

"Some one they are highly interested in I should suppose by the length of the conference. O!" he continued, as the carriage began to move, "it is my brother and the Egremonts."

Adela felt the blood run cold in her cheeks, yet curious to behold the destined bride of Auber, she darted a look of intent inquiry into the carriage, and both wished and dreaded its stopping when it reached them; but it rolled slowly by with nothing more than an exchange of looks and bows. Adela wished to ask which was Miss Egremont, but she trembled too much to trust her voice with the inquiry; for though she had carefully avoided meeting Mr. Auber's eyes, she felt the influence of his presence too sensibly. Frederic, as if aware of her wish, gave her some information of the party as they past.

"The lady in the blue satin pelisse," cried he, "is Mrs. Auber elect; the lady next to her, her maternal aunt Mrs. Saugrober, who has contributed her share to the spoiling her niece's disposition, and to make amends for which she means to do all she can to improve her fortune. The lady with her back to the horses, seated at my brother's side, is Lady Ruthven, a widow, still beautiful, though no longer young, and I apprehend cherishes some fatal designs on the liberty of Lord Egremont. I gave Seeton a significant nod of congratulation on his happy situation, cooped in a carriage on a sultry day, with Dotage, Folly, and Finesse."

Adela suppressed a sigh, and was not sorry when

soon after the party proposed returning to Russel Square; but in the course of their way new arrangements took place, so that on reaching Sir Hubert's, Caroline and Adela only entered the house. Miss Auber and Lord Milsom quitting their horses to take a place in Lady Auber's carriage, which immediately drove off; and Frederic at his father's particular request remounted and attended him to the Earl of Errol's.

As soon as the ladies reached the drawing-room, a letter was brought to Caroline, which threw her into evident agitation, and which she retired to read, so that Adela found herself left in peaceable possession of the spacious and splendid apartment, which seemed to mock by its brilliancy and magnificence the loneliness and sadness of her heart. She took off her hat and laid it on the table before her, and then threw herself on a couch with a sigh and attitude the most melancholy. She did not perceive through the open door of the next room, the advancing form of Seeton, and when she looked up as he approached and said—

"I fear you will think me an intruder," her eyes were swimming in tears. Thrown off his guard by a circumstance so unexpected, by a sight so touching, he caught her hand, exclaiming—

"My sweet Miss Belmont! my lovely friend whence this emotion?"

She withdrew her hand, and endeavouring to force a smile, replied—

"You must remember how recently I have left Wales, and pardon my weakness."

A mixed expression of curiosity and anxiety rose in his countenance as he observed—

"You have left much to regret."

"Every thing!" said Adela with warmth.

"*Every thing?*" repeated Auber as his cheek changed at what he deemed the confirmation of his fears; and then, as if summoning courage to prosecute the inquiry, which still he dreaded to make, he added—

"The remembrance of your discomposure last night has haunted me all day, am I worthy to know the reason of it?"

Adela hesitated.

"I am unpardonable," he continued, "and you very properly punish my temerity. Forgive me, and impute my importunity to my anxiety for your happiness—I would fain have hoped your uneasiness arose from no source of very great importance."

"A mere trifle I assure you," replied Adela, anxious to convince him she did not wish to withhold her confidence, and certain he had not seen it, she added, "It arose from the mere apprehension of having lost a miniature."

"Your anxiety proves how highly you value it," he rejoined, fixing on her eyes in which the keenness of inquiry was softened with the beam of hope; "It was your mother's, I suppose?"

"No," she answered, for she was too entirely a stranger to falsehood to seek a refuge in it on the present occasion, though she felt the dilemma in which she had involved herself.

"Perhaps your father's?" continued the anxious inquirer.

"No," she replied again, while the blush that had been rising on her cheek, now assumed the deepest die.

"I beg your pardon," cried he coldly, as he rose and walked to the window. Adela would have given the world to follow him, to have told him the secret of her heart, and win him back to her in all the beaming sweetness, the kind confidence with which he had first gained an interest in her bosom. "But it is best thus," she mentally exclaimed. Just then the door opened and a servant informed her, Miss Auber wished to see her.

"Tell her I shall come immediately." She hesitated in the hope that Mr. Auber would turn; he did not, and with a heart bursting with emotion she left the room. With feelings not less highly wrought, the moment he was assured she was gone he traversed the apartment as he ejaculated, "My father's information was correct: that miniature, that object of her wild solicitude, confirms it. Yet how difficult to read this devious sex! what meant the soft light in her melting eyes last night when she placed her hand in mine? But what matter to me what it meant, am I not doomed!" and he struck his burning forehead and paced to and fro with a heavy tread.

Miss Egremont, (who had scarcely been a twelvemonth motherless) was an only child, the common idol of both parents, and a maternal aunt, the widow of a Dutch merchant. Her person was that which is generally designated pretty, her features were small

but inexpressive, her eyes bright and finely formed, but had a character of slyness and cunning which was termed by some, and believed by others to be playfulness and archness. Her figure was *petite*, but proportionate; her manners easy from an habitual intercourse with the polished and refined, but strongly tinctured with pride and vanity, which she was an adept in suppressing, or bringing forth according to the persons she conversed with. Nature had given her a sweet voice, and she sung delightfully, which with dancing formed the amount of her acquirements, being alike too weak and too indolent to aim at any thing more than a superficial knowledge of every other branch of education. How, it will be asked, could the refined, the elevated Secton Auber fall into such a snare? How, let it rather be asked, could he escape the systematic machinations of his father's policy, aided by such coadjutors as Lord Egremont and his daughter? To Captain Auber it was sufficient to know her to be the sole heiress of immense wealth, and well born. *Her* stimulants of action were pride and passion; and Lord Egremont, charmed to find her affections point to an object so unexceptionable, gave it his entire concurrence and support:

> "Of all the trophies which vain mortals boast,
> By wit, by valour, or by wisdom won—
> The first, and fairest in a young man's eye
> Is woman's captive heart."

Her preference flattered Secton, her father's friendship and readiness to serve him excited his gratitude; his heart was free, and though aware that she inspired him with none of the delirium of passion, he thought

his feelings towards her were sufficiently kind to make their future life peaceful and happy. Hurried on by a stream of concurring, propelling circumstances, he entered into a solemn engagement, and was received into the Egremont family with the most open demonstrations of attachment and confidence. The whim of the wealthy Mrs. Saugrober, whose displeasure their interest (one of their household gods) forbade their risking, delayed the marriage till Miss Egremont should be of age, and she yet wanted one year to that happy period of emancipation.

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## CHAPTER IX.

"Farewell! our hopes were born in fears,
And nursed 'mid vain regrets;
Like winter suns it rose in tears,
Like them in tears it sets." MOORE.

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ADELA endeavoured to calm down her feeling as she ascended the stairs to Caroline's room; and her efforts were so far successful that she wore the appearance of composure when she entered. She found Miss Auber fluttered and distressed, and the effect of weeping was visible in her eyes. Adela's sympathy was immediately excited, and she flew to her with the most anxious interest and concern.

"My dear Adela, I am very wretched," she exclaimed, as her quivering lip and faultering voice betrayed the emotion she struggled to suppress, "and I call upon your friendship to give me aid and consolation."

"Tell me what I can do to soothe, to solace you," replied Adela, while a new gush of tenderness awakened in her heart for the sister of Seeton Auber.

"You must have long seen that my mind was oppressed with a secret sorrow," said Caroline. "Will you be the depositary of that secret?"

"Yes, and preserve it inviolable as my honour. Relieve your oppressed heart, give vent to your feelings, and see how large a part I'd gladly take to mitigate your sufferings—speak, dearest Caroline," she continued "for—

> 'The grief that does not speak,
> Whispers the o'erfraught heart, and bids it break.'"

a tear started as she spoke, for the pent-up sorrows of her own breast appeared to threaten that consummation.

"Read that letter," cried Caroline drawing one from her bosom. "In the meantime I will endeavour to gather composure for the story that is to follow it." And retiring into the next room Adela heard her burst into tears. She did not follow her, she felt tears were her best relief, and that an intrusive and ill-timed condolence defeats the end at which it aims. Wiping away those with which her eyes were still wet, she unfolded, and began the perusal of the following letter:—

"I am just returned from a melancholy pilgrimage in Wales, in the hopes of meeting you, where however the evil destiny that presides over my fate pursued me and denied me that consolation I know not what thus impels me to cloud the lustre of your brighter lot, by casting across your path the shadow of an outcast such as I am. Alone and desolate I often wonder what is the active principle within me that forbids my lying down in the dreamless repose of death—others may start from such an idea, they would probably leave a parent, child, or friend to mourn them—none such are there to me. I have not even a dog—that only friend in whom the changes of fortune work no change. I am alone in the world, and never more so than in this populous wilderness, this peopled desert, where the ball of interest is tossed from one to another till I wonder it does not burst and shew the world the bubble that it is.

"I have had some employment in portrait-painting, and still keep my apartments in the Strand, where I beg you will address a line as soon as you conveniently can. I have made no friends, I can make none; you are the only being to whom my heart has ever responded; a line from you will be manna in the wilderness—water in the desert. It is not in the grasp of language to express my feelings—what I might have been under another and a happier destiny I dare not breathe, for there is a pollution in the atmosphere of poverty that taints profession with the suspicion of deceit. What I am through your fostering humanity,

and shall be till the vital spark you preserved is extinct, I may avow.

"Your grateful
*Clarence.*"

"This is no common being," she exclaimed, as she re-perused it with glistening eyes; and giving, as she ever did, play to her imagination, she brought his image to her eyes under circumstances so touching that the large drops fell fast from them, when the dressing-room door opened and Secton appeared. In the state of mind he was in when Miss Belmont left the drawing-room he had not distinctly heard what the servant had said, therefore in coming to his sister's room in order to avoid Miss Egremont he did not expect to meet Adela.

"Do not let me disturb you," cried he, seeing her hastily fold the letter; "I thought Caroline was here." There was a melancholy in the tones of his voice that went to Adela's soul.

"She will be here in a moment," cried she, rising, "I will go and seek her for you."

"By no means," said Mr. Auber, restraining her, "I cannot consent to give you that trouble."

"This is an instance of *misterming*," said Adela, reverting to an observation he had made the first day they had ever met.

"Is it so?" cried he with softness, and he scarcely restrained himself from taking her hand, as the memory of that day rose on his mind: but there was a repelling power in the letter she held, which ima-

gination instantly suggested Malcolm was the author of.

He had reason to congratulate himself that he had been thus restrained, for a head was suddenly put in at the door, and immediately after Miss Egremont tripped, in exclaiming—

"Ah! truant, I have found you at last."

"Have you been seeking me then?" said Seeton, with a slight appearance of disconcertion, and much oppressed with emotion, which, however, did not long prevent his remembering what was due to Miss Belmont, taking whose hand he presented her to his destined bride, who received the introduction with a slight and supercilious curtsey, and a pouting air. Adela's colour kept varying under the influence of contending feelings, and Caroline's entrance was a relief to all parties.

The sound of a carriage immediately after announced an arrival, and in a few minutes Emilia entered the room. Elated with high spirits, her brilliant countenance formed a contrast to the melancholy faces of the party she joined, and with some surprise she exclaimed—

"Heavens! what is the matter with you all? This is the very cave of melancholy. Pray let us emerge from its Cimmerian darkness. Come thou "bright-haired Vesta," addressing Miss Egremont, and thou 'pensive nun," touching Adela playfully under the chin, "and I can't think of a name for you, Caroline, come and look at my purchases."

"You forget the cherub Contemplation," cried

Caroline, rallying her spirits and pointing to her musing brother.

"O! he is never seen in the train of Euphrosyne," said Mr. Auber, endeavouring to catch the tone of the party; and bowing, he withdrew, while the ladies followed Emilia to her room, where her maid was bringing parcels from the carriage.

"To night then, Adela, my love," whispered Caroline, "as we have been interrupted, join me at an early hour in my dressing-room. I shall accept no invitations either for scandal at home, or cards at abroad, but retire *à la bonne heure*."

"Do not fear that I shall forget," answered Adela; "your confidence is dearer to me than any pleasure I could meet either at home or abroad."

"Only look at this lace, Caroline," exclaimed Miss Egremont beckoning her from Adela, "did you ever see a lovelier pattern? And these bracelets are they not enchanting?"

Perfectly so," replied Caroline; "come hither Miss Belmont, and let me try them on the most beautiful arm in the world. Adela do you not hear me?" for she was at the moment listening to a whisper from Emilia.

"O! Miss Auber is telling her some secret," cried the mortified Miss Egremont. "I am sure you are all very condescending."

"Very condescending," repeated Caroline, pretending to catch only the last words of the sentence. "Yes she is, and beings endowed as she is, are not always so."

Miss Egremont was going to explain, but Adela's advancing checked her, and Caroline clasped the bracelet on Miss Belmont's arm.

"Do you admire them?" asked Emilia.

"O! certainly," replied Adela, "it would be impossible to do otherwise."

"Then do me the favour to accept them," she cried, taking the one that laid on the table and presenting it to Adela; "and let it remind you of Emilia Auber, whenever chance or circumstance may separate us." Adela pressed her hand, for she did not give her time to speak, as she hastily added, "I think we shall scarcely have time to dress for dinner."

Miss Egremont looked at her watch and said—

"I shall not think about it yet, I'll go down and see who is in the drawing-room, and learn who is likely to dine with us."

"Very few I assure you," said Emilia, "only our own family, so there will be no occasion for you to be very particular. Every thing I have is at your service, and my maid will attend you; so do not think of going home to dress."

"Very well, then I shall be back by and bye," said Miss Egremont, and she tripped away.

When Miss Belmont entered the dining-room, Emilia introduced her to Mrs. Saugrober, Lady Ruthven, and Lord Egremont; the latter sat next her during dinner, and paid her very marked attention, infinitely to the annoyance of two or three of the party.

"And pray who is this, Miss Belmont?" whispered Mrs. Saugrober to her neice.

"An importation from the Welsh mountains," replied that young lady in the same under tone,—"half Welsh, half Flemish."

"Your father seems very much taken with her," continued the old lady.

"Well, I am sure I do not know what he sees in her," rejoined the young one. "I think it's becoming the fashion to admire her, and every body you know follows the reigning mode, however ridiculous it may be."

"Then it is agreed!" cried Lord Egremont.

"What, papa?" inquired his daughter.

"To make a party for Covent Garden to night. I know when I begin to canvass for votes, I shall have the suffrage of the ladies in my favour."

"What induces your lordship to auger thus favourably of the success of your project?" inquired Lady Ruthven.

"Because the proceeds of this night are devoted to the alleviation of distress; and charity always ranks among the feminine virtues," replied Lord Egremont.

"Well, you will discover shortly who has it and who has it not, if going to Covent Garden is to be the test," cried Caroline.

"There is something ill-omened in that observation, Miss Auber, and seems to threaten at least one defaulter," cried his lordship. "But I will not anticipate my fate. I will wait till the ladies are in their own dominion, the drawing-room, and we will sue for their support while they sip their coffee."

"You mean to go I hope," said Mr. Auber to Miss Belmont, as she passed him on the retiring of the

ladies. She replied in the negative, and he had neither spirits nor opportunity to say more.

"I think we had better make our escape to my room," said Caroline aside to Adela, "before the gentlemen join us, and we shall have a long and uninterrupted evening."

But she had scarcely finished the sentence when Frederic and Lord Egremont entered the room.

"Treason against the state of Venice," exclaimed the former, "and depend on it my lord, this is the chief conspirator," laying his hand on Caroline's arm.

"I hope you are not giving ear to her pernicious counsels?" said his lordship, advancing to Adela. "You will not have the cruelty to deny us your company?"

"I am engaged my lord," said Miss Belmont.

"Papa, I want to speak to you," cried Miss Egremont from the further end of the apartment, (at that instant Adela took advantage of his lordship's momentary diversion to make her escape to Caroline) and his daughter repeating her request, he went up to her.

"Lord, papa," cried she in a whispering, pouting tone, "our box will not hold all you're inviting, and I hate such a crowd."

"What would you say, my lord," cried Lady Ruthven, advancing and tapping him with her fan, "if *I* was to refuse going"

"You could not be so unlike yourself," replied his lordship, and he soon found himself a prisoner. Lady Ruthven making him take a place next her, in that style of playful coquetry, which in spite of the new attraction, flattered and pleased him.

In the mean time, Frederic was trying all his powers of persuasion to win Adela and Caroline to enter into the play-going scheme, and though the latter rarely refused or opposed a request of his, (who was her favourite brother,) she had this evening the strongest motive in the world for a steady adherence to her original determination.

The loss of Adela to the party considerably damped Lord Egremont's ardour about the business, who had again approached her, and was murmuring his regrets, when the rest of the gentlemen entered the drawing room. Seeton, evidently flushed with wine, was advancing to join them, as Caroline, with her usual presence of mind, fearing he would commit himself, arrested his progress.

"Do you know, Mr. Auber," cried Lady Ruthven, "we have been thinking of creating a new order of knighthood."

"And why a *new* one, my dear lady?" asked Captain Auber.

"Oh! I know *you* are a foe to innovation, my dear uncle," said Emilia; "if you are to be enrolled among the number of our knights, I suppose it must be in some existing order."

"Let him be *a grand cross* then by all means," said Caroline; and a general laugh attested that every one felt the inuendo.

"Of *the golden spur*," added Frederic, bitterly feeling at the moment he spoke, how recklessly his father sacrificed his children to Plutus.

"I pant for the creation," said Lord Milsom. "Let every lady that pleases propose an order, and

that which has the greatest number of votes in its favour shall be the one chosen. What says my Emilia?"

"Oh! I should suggest the order of *military merit*," replied she, smiling, and looking from his lordship (who was also in the guards,) to Frederic."

"And I," said Lady Ruthven, "should propose that of "*the happy alliance*," and she looked significantly at Mr. Auber, and still more so at Lord Egremont.

"And which would be Miss Belmont's choice?" asked Seeton.

"Her choice is mine whatever it be," whispered Lord Egremont. "I am impatient for your decision," he added aloud.

"Indeed my lord," cried the retiring Adela, "I have not the presumption to propose one; but if I may pretend to support a suggestion already advanced, it would be Miss Auber's."

"Thank you, dear Adela," cried the lively and elegant Emilia, nodding to her with the most playful vivacity.

"No, no," simultaneously exclaimed the gentlemen, "name an order, name an order."

"I trust then," said Adela timidly, "I shall not come under the ban denounced against innovators, if I name the once celebrated order of the *Amaranth*."

"Charming! charming!" ejaculated the majority of the company.

"The order of the Amaranth will carry it," cried the exulting Frederic. "Let it be decided by the brief process of a show of hands."

"Of ladies as well as gentlemen?" asked Emilia,

"Oh! certainly," replied Frederic.

"Then there is mine in the air," she exclaimed, throwing up her white arm, while Caroline stood on tiptoe raising both hers.

The only dormant hands were Miss Egremont's, Lady Ruthven's, Mrs. Saugrober's, and Captain Auber's; who cut somewhat a ridiculous figure when the reversed proclamation presented their four dissenting palms.

"Only four by my arithmetic!" cried Frederic, who had appointed himself teller. "We have double the number in its favour. The order of the Amaranth has won the day."

"Well," cried Lord Milsom, "What say you to deferring the creation till my sweet Emilia accompanies me to Derbyshire, and let it be made a *fete* day.

"Oh! a most excellent arrangement," cried the delighted bride expectant, "What a gala we shall have! it's a delightful idea, and quite new."

"I think if we are going to Covent Garden," croaked Mrs. Saugrober, "we shall be late."

Lord Egremont now felt very little inclination to leave Russel Square, but he had so strenuously urged the project, that he could not fall back. The ladies tripped away for their shawls and cloaks, all excepting Caroline and Adela, who gladly retired to the seclusion of a dressing room.

## CHAPTER X.

"Come rest in this bosom, my own stricken deer,
Though the herd have fled from thee, thy home is still here·
Here still is the smile that no cloud can o'ercast,
And the heart and the hand all thy own to the last."

"THE world is all a masquerade," cried Caroline when quietly seated with Adela, "where every one supports an assumed character. Even the guileless and most undesigning are often obliged to wear a mask, and teach their lips a jargon foreign to the feelings of their heart."

Adela felt the truth of the remark, for she had scarcely stepped on to the busy scene of life, before she had been initiated into the science of disguising her sentiments, and dissembling her feelings.

"How true," continued Miss Auber, "and how common as true are the lines—

'Oft anxious care in rich brocade is dress'd,
And diamonds glitter on an aching breast!'

How often have I myself realized them!

"It was about the commencement of the winter before last, that I accompanied Mrs. Chudleigh, an intimate friend of my deceased mother to the south of France, whither the physicians had dismissed her daughter to die. Poor Emma was very much attached to me, and her hold on my heart grew stronger,

as the term of our friendship seemed approaching to its close. She suffered much during the voyage, but after our settlement at Nice, recovered so amazingly that we entertained great hopes of her ultimate re-establishment. I used to drive her out in a poney chaise, unshackled and unrestricted by ceremony or attendants; and sometimes we would leave our little vehicle to wander in the charming woods and groves of that delicious place. One morning (having arranged our plan over night) we rose very early, packed our breakfast, consisting of a variety of biscuits, fruits, and sweetmeats, into a little basket, determined to pass a long morning in the woods; and taking with us the last new novel which had just been sent us in a parcel from England. Emma was in high spirits, I never saw her look so well or appear so happy, and the weather was the sweetest it is possible to imagine. Leaving our patient little *Pegasus* at the entrance of the wood, we began to search for a spot, whose surpassing beauty might invite our sojourn, and where we might spread our repast. At length we suited ourselves, and the sweet invalid insisted on being permitted to lay out our breakfast; and though apprehensive she would fatigue herself, I did not oppose her. Having arranged every thing, she threw herself in a reclining posture on the soft grass saying—

"'Now we are perfect Arcadians.'

"I saw she was somewhat exhausted, and began to regret that we had come wholly unattended, but she was always jealous and angry at any precautions that hinted at her state of health, she was therefore never

better pleased than when the attendance of servants was dispensed with. I opened my book, and began to read a volume, of which the style immediately pleased, and the story soon interested us. But on looking up some time after, I perceived Emma had dropped asleep. Tired with sitting, I rose and wandered a little way further into the wood. My heart was freer and lighter that morning than it has ever been since; and as soon as I was far enough not to disturb Emma, I began to sing Rogers' sweet little song of—

'Down in my little native vale.'

"This minutia is tedious to you Adela, yet oh! in reverting to that morning which has given a colour to my future destiny, I give out the details, as the epicure imbibes the flavour of the cordial he loves best, drop by drop, and love to let it linger over my heart, as he does that over his palate.

"The sound of footsteps checked my song, and made me turn, when I started at beholding a young man, pale and apparently fainting, approaching me.

"'Stay Madam,' he cried, seeing I was going to avoid him, 'In pity stay and hear me.'

"His energy commanded my attention, his pathos touched my heart. I stopped: he hesitated.

"'I scarcely know, Madam,' he again continued, 'how to take advantage of your condescension—scarcely know how to tell you the abject wretchedness of the being before you—I am famished:' and the wildness of gesture and expression which ac-

companied these words would have terrified me, but that compassion for him banished every thought for myself.

" 'Stay here a moment,' I cried, 'and I will bring you food.' I flew to where I had left Emma, and hastily collected in the basket the provision which very fortunately we had but sparingly invaded; and returned to him fleet as light. O! let me draw a veil over a scene that is written on my heart of hearts; over which I have often paused till I have wept tears of blood. I returned to Emma whom my sudden and hasty return had awakened, and prepared her to receive the stranger whom a short time after I conducted to her. His looks were renovated, the providence of Heaven seemed to have decreed that all our arrangements should tend to his preservation, for we had with us a small flask of wine, which we had neither touched nor thought of, and no action of my life was so pleasurable to me as the pouring it into a little silver cup, and presenting it to him. He did not speak, but his eyes thanked me, and though his lips have never decisively avowed it,

'From that hour' he 'loved me.'

He told us that he had been imprudent and unfortunate, but that he trusted that his aberrations had never been of a nature to injure any but himself; that in a moment of desperation he had entered the army, but unable to bear the insolence of those whom the chance of better fortune had placed above him, he had quarrelled with a superior officer and deserted, and that his aim was to escape to England. I asked him

if he had any friends in Great Britain, 'Alas! madam, where is it the unfortunate can boast any?' was his reply. 'I have not a friend in the world!' He had one, Adela, at that moment, nay he had more than one, for the gentle Emma's heart was immediately interested in his favour, and she afterwards considerably aided me in alleviating his distresses. For some weeks we saw my Clarence every day, and he accepted from me the aids my circumstances enabled me to afford him, and Emma was the only person privy to the adventure, or acquainted with his situation. Our mutual love was understood, but never spoken of. Our intercourse was singular and interesting, and certainly forms the happiest portion of my life.

"One evening, Emma was suddenly seized with indisposition, and I could not, would not leave her; the next day she was worse; the third she died. In my grief at her loss, I thought nothing could add to the poignancy of my feelings, when a letter from Clarence, penned in evident haste and confusion, informed me he had been discovered, and was a prisoner. No language can do justice to the distraction of my mind; fortunately I had an apparent cause for venting it, and all my agony was attributed to the strength of my attachment for Emma.

"Day succeeded day, and no further tidings of Clarence reached me; my father came to Nice to attend us back to England, and about six weeks after the decease of poor Emma, I found myself in Calais. I have no remembrance of a journey in which all was inanity or despair. We had left Mrs. Chudleigh at

Boulogne, and finding a vessel ready to sail, we did not stop at Calais more than a few hours.

"We were scarcely on board, when a party of military in search of a fugitive and a deserter, recalled me to a sense of the passing scene by reminding me of Clarence, and the first pleasurable feeling I had experienced for weeks arose from seeing them depart, after a strict search, without finding their victim. Some hours after I was sitting by a mere chance alone in the cabin, when I was surprised by a hurried entrance—the person advanced, sunk on his knees and catching my hand pressed it to his lips. It was Clarence—I wonder I did not scream—I wonder I did not faint—we had not time to exchange a word—he quitted the cabin, and immediately my father and some other persons entered. All had passed so rapidly, it wore so much the air of a dream, that I could almost have fancied it such, but for a few lines which Clarence contrived to give me (written with a pencil on a leaf torn from a pocket-book,) the next morning. The blessed certainty that he was safe and near me, filled me with transport: for a time I forgot the obstacles that rose like the barriers of fate between us; and it was not till we landed at Dover that I reflected how uncertain was our chance of meeting again. One hurried interview we obtained, in which I conjured him never to leave me ignorant of his fate, nor to refuse me the pleasure of serving him whenever it might be in my power. I read the struggles of contending passions in his countenance. Gratitude borrowed the burning language of love, for his feelings could not be suppressed; but he was too honourable

to make professions that would betray me into an ill-sorted unsanctioned engagement. I loved him the better for his forbearance, and he lost nothing by this sacrifice of inclination to honour; for in the sanctuary of my heart I paid him the vows of an unuttered, unalterable love. I saw his pride wince under the sense of obligation; I saw him struggle against the consciousness of a degrading poverty and my heart bled for him. How intolerable did I feel the shackles that nature and custom throw round the conduct of woman. As a man I could have taken him by the hand, introduced him to my connections, and interested myself in advancing his fortune; as it was I had no alternative but leaving him to his fate, with such a temporary aid as his revolting feelings would suffer him to accept. You will perhaps wonder why I did not contrive some mode of giving him anonymous relief which might at once have spared his feelings and my own! I had no time for it. We were on the wing for London. Various and agitating were my feelings during that journey. What would become of Clarence I could not conjecture; though I was aware of the ingenuity that characterized his countrymen, he had a mixture of *John Bullish* helplessness about him that awakened my tenderest fears.

"We have corresponded ever since, and you can see by his last letter which I shewed you this morning how sad both his feelings and his fortune yet remain. My father's vigilance has entirely deprived me of any opportunity of seeing him: a vigilance which my refusal of an advantageous offer soon after my return from France has served to quicken. What

chance is to interpose in our favour Heaven knows! Though I cannot banish hope, never was there hope that fed on less than mine. The fruitlessness of his late visit to Wales has touched me to the quick—I have yet to learn why he did not apprise me of his intention; but I had received no letter from him till yesterday for a length of time. All my attempts at rendering him pecuniary assistance, since his arrival in England, has been uniformly and firmly rejected, and yet that he must need such aids I cannot doubt. Now that I have a friend, a confident," and she took Adela's hand as she spoke, "I can deceive him into serving himself. I have a little project—will you undertake to execute it for me, and entitle yourself to my eternal gratitude?"

"Command me to the utmost," cried Adela, warmly; now first breaking a silence which intense interest and sympathy had imposed.

"I cannot, Adela, venture to call on Clarence, many things forbid such a step; and were there no other than the fear of frustrating my little plans of serving him, that were of itself sufficient. You must go alone."

"I will do any thing, every thing you wish," she replied; "only let me perfectly understand what it is you wish."

"My dear Adela, I shall yet I trust be able to repay this goodness. I wish you, my love, to call on Clarence as a stranger; and as the best, indeed the only pretence by which it is possible to serve him, sit for your picture: when it is finished, you can, without exciting suspicion, find yourself highly delighted with

it, and pay for it according to its merits, not his demand."

"I undertake this commission with pleasure," said Adela.

"Will you pay your first visit to-morrow morning, my love?" anxiously inquired Miss Auber.

"Certainly," rejoined her friend. Caroline rose and embraced her, exclaiming—

"My dearest, sweetest Adela, how dear will be the miniature, which will at once be a resemblance of you, and the work of his hands. Do you know you bear a likeness to my Clarence which struck me the moment I beheld you; and you will pardon the acknowledgment—that has been the chief source of my attachment to you. "It lies," she continued studying Miss Belmont's countenance, "in the expression, not the features. His dark eyes have the same melancholy softness when he is sad, the same scintillating lustre when his feelings are awakened. You will see him to-morrow, Adela—you will see a being loved, and worthy to be loved. Take note of every thing, spare no minutia, all will be interesting to me—tell me how he looked—tell me all he said—note every tone, and number every word. Love, Adela, makes more changes than ever Proteus assumed, it has made strange alterations in me. It has called many feelings from the chaos of my heart, which I knew not it possessed. It has taught me what I never practised before—economy. I have avoided cards and every species of extravagance, that my finances may meet my designs. Love came like a wise and prudent minister to my insolvent fortune, after the destructive

ravages of fashionable folly, and restored its strength; act therefore in the present case as liberally as you please."

"And as prudently as I ought," added Adela. "Remember, my dear Caroline, to be too lavish were to betray ourselves, and close the avenue through which you contemplate to aid his fortune, instead of opening it."

"True, true," cried Caroline, "you will act better for me than I could do for myself, for your judgment will come coolly and calmly to the task, while mine would be hurried and blinded by the force of passion; I leave every thing to you."

"But in all else," cried Adela, "I must be guided —remember I am a stranger in London."

"We must take every precaution to avoid discovery," said Caroline musing. "If you have a carriage of my uncle's the servants must know where you stop —and though nothing might arise from it, I would not risk such a possibility. If you have a hackney coach from this door, your going unattended may excite observation, and still the direction may transpire. What had we best do?—I have it," she exclaimed suddenly, after a few seconds consideration. "I will walk out with you to-morrow morning to Selby's my dressmaker, for we must both have dresses on the occasion of Emilia's wedding. I will leave you there, taking the servant with me, and from thence you can have a coach to the Strand, keep it waiting, and then drive to me at Lord Egremont's in Grosvenor Square."

"Most admirably planned," said Adela. "I shall go, *mais non pas sans peur.*"

"What should you fear?" quickly asked Caroline, with the alarm that the probable frustration of her darling scheme naturally excited, "you do not repent the promise of assistance you have just given?"

"O! no, no," cried Adela, "it is nothing but the common, silly timidity of my nature."

Just then the sound of the carriages announced the return of the party from Covent Garden, and soon after the friends separated and retired to their respective apartments.

## CHAPTER XI.

"Home is a name of more than magic spell,
Whose sacred power the wanderer best can tell,
He who long distant from his native land
Feels at her name his eager soul expand.
Whether as patriot, husband, father, friend,
To that dear point his thoughts, his wishes tend;
And still he owns, where'er his footsteps roam,
Life's choicest blessings centre all at home."

It will be necessary to turn for a moment to Wales, lest we should forget personages destined to take no unimportant part in the embryo events of this tale.

Mrs. Belmont, after Adela's departure felt a return

of all the desolation of her widowhood. All that had been most sorrowful in her past life, came with a clearness of recollection over her mind and thought, which with

> "Its lightning flash can rage
> In one wild madd'ning minute through an age,"

made a fleet transit from the home of her infancy, to the last refuge of her declining years, rending in its course the veil from many a scene, which had long lain dormant in the repose of departed time.

She was reading Adela's first letter from London for the third or fourth time, when Mr. Noel, who had continued a constant visitor, and Mr. Annesley, made a call. The traces of recent tears were yet visible in her countenance as they entered, and the conversation soon took its tone from the emotions that filled her heart.

"How little do we know, Mr. Annesley," cried she, "what our feelings will be till the hour of trial comes! I should scarcely have had the courage to part with Adela, had I guessed what it would have cost me. This separation has opened many a wound that was 'skinned, not healed,' and this sweet home, which she made the abode of harmony and affection, has since her departure been nothing but the theatre of painful reminiscence, and uneasy anticipation."

"But, my dear madam," cried the young divine, "how little effort have you made to avoid the natural consequence of such an event. You have seated yourself on the sea-shore, and waited the coming of this tide of sad thoughts, which are overwhelming you;

and they as a common sequence have tinged the future with their own melancholy hue. Let me persuade you to return with us to Glannam."

This proposal, warmly seconded by Mr. Noel, was acceded to, and taking an arm of each, professing herself quite equal to it, she commenced the walk. Her spirits gradually gained that level state of feeling, which the spirit of peace that breathed about Mr. Annesley always infused into those, who, like Mrs. Belmont, had sufficient sensibility to feel his influence.

"When we contemplate the brevity and uncertainty of human life," cried she, "it is impossible not to wonder that mankind are in general such bad economists of the means of happiness;—that so few seek it where it is most certainly to be found, and most desirable it should be preserved;—I mean in the circle of home."

"These reflections," replied Mr. Annesley, smiling, "arise I presume from the recollections of the busy world, which Miss Belmont's letter has induced. Certainly the majority of those who are on the wing for pleasure fly as far from their own fire-sides, and from themselves as they can, and for such the precept 'Know thyself' has been written in vain. Yet age, ill-health, and a thousand contingencies must at some period throw them on both one and the other."

"And then," continued Mrs. Belmont, "they find either a waste or a wilderness; for such it must ever be, where no care has been taken to pull the weeds, and plant the flowers."

"Home," resumed the young curate, "where all

the social charities, and best feelings of our nature spring, is the true sphere of happiness; there emulation exists without envy, and affection without deceit; unlike the fragile compacts of society which spring from a thousand motives of interest and policy, and which the same motives may dissolve at any or every moment. The circle of a virtuous home, cemented by the affinity of blood, and the force of habit, presents a bond of unity the most permanent and complete, every member of which from the cradle to the grave can never under any circumstances be as strangers to each other. When this seat of the most endearing virtues and kindliest emotions is desolated by neglect, or embroiled by discord; how heavy is the penalty attached to the perpetration of a crime so flagrant. When we contemplate the goodness of our Creator in giving us hearts of susceptibility, and objects to awaken them, and reason to judge between the good and the evil, how opposite to every precept of gratitude and common sense, appears the wayward choice mankind too often make. Placed like our first parents in a home of abundant sources of happiness, the arch fiend, not as of old in the form of a serpent, but in that of pleasure, beckons the young wife from her fire-side; intercepts the husband in his way home; tempts the disobedient daughter and the erring son: and while every one of these start for fleeting enjoyment down a different path, they all ultimately meet again in shame, in sorrow, and in repentance in the last gloomy stage of the Road to Ruin. But I believe I am fancying myself in the pulpit, and am literally preaching, rather than conversing."

"Pray do not interrupt a flow of ideas so consonant with my feelings," said Mrs. Belmont. "I hope, nay I am sure it is not at variance with yours, Mr. Noel."

"At variance? far otherwise," he replied, "I am among the "poor unfledged" who have scarcely—

'——Wing'd from view of the nest,
Or know what air's from home.'

Therefore with the *maladie des adieux* still hanging about my heart, you must suppose that the tone of the present conversation harmonizes well with the still vibrating chords of filial and fraternal love. Perhaps the world has never produced a being so depraved in whose soul the name of home could not awaken some kind and warm reminiscences—none so happy, but have some fond regret clinging to the scene of their childhood."

"None, none," repeated Mrs. Belmont with fervour, "and to how few is it permitted to return to that remembered, that regretted home; after—

'All their wanderings through this world of care!'"

"Since then," resumed Mr. Annesley, "the home we quit on our outset in life, is seldom open to our return; and as in all probability it is our destiny to make a new one, in which we are ourselves to exercise the duties and affections that fostered our own youth; a determination to consider, and to make it the centre of our enjoyments, is a prelude to its really becoming such, since a mind previously long at variance with the habits necessary to a respectable and happy home, seldom conforms to them with grace

or facility." Mr. Annesley again seemed to forget, in his interest for the cause of virtue, and in his anxiety that Malcolm should keep its precepts in mind, that he was not officiating. "Without a conformity," he continued, "to the holy dictates of religion, duty and virtue, families are nothing more than compulsatory associations: the customs of society, and the legal dependencies of their relative situations keep them together. The social intercourse that endears the family circle to each other is unknown; each have separate views and pursuits, and selfishness becomes the reigning principle; the tempers and tastes which might have been judiciously formed to make home a seat of blessedness, suffered to grow wild, untrained or misdirected, destroy individual peace, and invade the common comforts of a hearth, from which every member takes wing at the first opportunity, without gratitude or regret."

They reached Glannam in a time apparently to themselvess inconceivably short, where the aged Mrs. Annesley received them with her usual good humour. Mrs. Belmont was introduced to Mr. Wingregin and his daughters, ana soon after dinner was served.

In the worthy divine and his nephew Mrs. Belmont discovered minds congenial with her own; with the rest of the party she felt no community, but what arose from the kindly feelings of reciprocal good-nature. The aged hostess was born to move in the humble sphere of the domestic duties, into which she brought a considerable share of common sense, so that her ideas and observations, though never elevated, were sometimes shrewd. The Mesdames Wingregin

were of that class of young ladies with which the world is overstocked, who neither have, nor seek to have, an original idea; who among themselves giggle and talk nonsense, and among their elders shew the only piece of wisdom they possess, that of holding their tongues; their father was a rough but good-hearted man, open to strong prejudices, which were soon betrayed in his conversation.

Some observations relative to France having occurred, elicited the following remark, delivered very much in the style of Matthews's unprejudiced traveller:

"I hate all foreigners. I've seen 'em at home; there they are all skipping after pleasure, and sniggering with conceit, as full of themselves as an egg's full of meat. I've seen them in my own country; here they are all spunging and fawning: screwing themselves in, and our own people out of every thing."

Mrs. Belmont could not suppress a quiet smile, the Annesleys looked uneasy, and Malcolm fiery; but the old man continued his remarks, which were addressed to no particular person.

"I never knew but one foreigner that I ever cared a dump for, and I did him a service, poor lad, and he was grateful for it too."

"Gratitude is of all climates, as well as genius," observed Mrs. Belmont.

"But I beg pardon, ma'am," cried Wingregin, "he was the only one I ever found had a notion of it. The French are too light, the Spaniards too lazy, to remember a service or to return it; and as for the Italians, they are they earth's vipers."

"And pray, sir," said Mrs. Belmont, "to what country did this happy exception belong?"

"He was a Frenchman, ma'am," was the reply.

"Dear! if he was a Frenchman," inquired one of his intelligent daughters, "how did you understand him, father?"

"Why he spoke English to be sure, Bessy; and it was an honour to him he spoke it so well. I fancy there was some mistake," and he smiled and nodded significantly at the gentlemen, "he's some English blood in him I'll be sworn one way or the other. I'll tell you all how it happened." And he drew his chair nearer to the table, on which he leaned both his elbows, and joining his two fore fingers, with two or three hems to clear his throat, he began. Having first alluded to some commercial speculations in which he had been engaged, which were spoken of in a manner so obscure, as to be sufficiently unintelligible to his hearers, he continued—"So just as all was right, and the next thing I was to think of was getting myself home, I meets this young Frenchman. This was the afternoon, as we sailed the next morning. I was coming along the street at rather a pretty round pace, and suddenly he pops himself before me, and says, 'You're a Briton?' 'You're right there my boy,' says I, 'and what o'that?' ''Tis the character of your country to generously stretch forth the hand of aid to the unfortunate,' said he, 'I am most truly such—I appeal to your humanity—I put my life in your hands.' 'Come to my lodgings, my boy,' says I, 'this is no place to talk, and tell me how I can serve you. For somehow he took me so by surprise, and there was something

so fair and open about him, and his choosing me for a protector in preference to every body else, and such like, that I took quite a liking to him for all he was a Frenchman. Well, when I got him home he tells me his story. It seemed he was a lad that had never known either father or mother, had received his education at a public college, had run many rigs, then listed for a soldier, and at last run away. I did'nt like him a bit the worse for that, for who would'nt run away from the French that could? I was resolved he should'nt be shot, if I could save him. So when I was ready to go aboard, I made him get into a sack, and I packed him all round with wool, so as to make it look round and full; tied the top, taking care however to give the poor boy some air-holes. This sack I helped aboard myself, and laid it on the deck. This was hardly done, when lo! and behold ye! the rummaging devils came and searched the vessel. I sits myself down on the sack, in a precious quake as I'll leave you to judge, but I affected to carry myself very jovially, and at last I had the satisfaction to see the mounseer's backs; a sight we Britons have seen pretty often, Mr. Annesley." And he twitched the divine's sleeve with a significant nod. "Well, I thought it best to let the blood-hounds get sheer off, before I let the lad see daylight; so I gets a bumper of brandy, for what between the wool and the fright I guessed the sweat he was in, and the moment he came out I made him drink it. Bless your soul you'd have thought he was mad: down he was upon his knees, up again, and straining me to his breast. I was never called such a lot of pretty names either before or

since." Here the old man drew out his handkerchief, but as if ashamed of an emotion that did honour to his heart, he complained of the heat, turned away, and pretended to wipe his forehead.

"Well, when we got ashore at Dover, I asked him if he wanted money, and I told him not to be meally mouthed, but speak out if he did. He said no: so I shook him heartily by the hand, and we parted, having first told him, should he ever come to my part of the world he'd always find a warm heart and a hearty welcome. Well do you know, I felt as queer as queer could be a whole hour or more after he left me; and every now and then in my way home, I found myself thinking of the lad; aye, and after I got home too. But at last of course it wore off—and I'd almost forgotten him, when the other day he comes pop upon me; but so altered, his own mother would hardly have known him. 'Holla!' says I, 'why I had almost forgot you!' 'That I have not you,' says he, and he grasped my hand; but as he did so, I felt his hand was all bone, and as cold as marble. So I said I was afraid it had fared badly with him—but he said no—though I'm sure it had. Bless your soul, he's a game fellow for all he's a Frenchman, none of your whining, pining, snivelling puppies. I could not get him to take bit or sup, he said he only came to breathe his 'undying gratitude, and to see his benefactor:' those were his very words," continued old Wingregin, with somewhat of a faultering and hysterical tone in his voice, "and off he was like a shot."

"By my faith, Annesley, then that was him among the ruins of Valle Crucis," cried Malcolm, eagerly.

"Is he tall, and pale? and was he dressed in black, with a most dejected appearance?" continued he, turning to Mr. Wingregin.

"The very same, the very same," said the old man. Mrs. Belmont now rose from her seat, and going up to the aged narrator took his hand.

"Though I am of the country you most severely proscribe, I trust you will make another exception in my favour; and as you have found one Frenchman alive to the sense of gratitude, believe also you have met one Italian deeply sensible of the true benevolence of your nature, and who hopes to rank among the number of your friends, and prove herself worthy of that title."

Though in the bronzed and weather-worn face of Wingregin, it would have been difficult to have distinguished a blush, it is positively asserted that he did blush: however that may be, he certainly stammered as he made something like an apology; but Mrs. Belmont's elegant encomiums, and graceful attentions soon banished every uneasy feeling.

"Pleasure given in conversation, like money lent in usury, returns with interest to those who dispense it." This is a remark founded in truth, and the worthy Wingregin exemplified it, for his narrative, which excited general interest, and made one among many stories which his adventurous life afforded, was not a jot less delightful to himself, than to his hearers.

"I am strongly interested in this melancholy stranger," cried Mrs. Belmont. "Is he still in this neighbourhood?"

"I fancy not," cried Malcolm, "for though I am always a-foot I have never seen him since."

"What age is he, Mr. Wingregin?" asked Mrs. Belmont.

"Three and twenty, ma'am," he replied, "or about that."

"So young! so unfortunate!" cried she, in a tone of sadness, "without friends or country. It is well he speaks the English language so perfectly. Did you ever hear," again addressing Mr. Wingregin, "how he acquired it?"

"From an English priest who was at the same college with him. He told me the very first evening I saw him, that he had had quite a passion for the language, and it seemed like predestination to him when fate threw him on the shores of Britain, and into British hands."

"From all you have said," resumed Mrs. Belmont, "I should imagine his person was interesting."

"Truly so," answered Mr. Annesley. "His form, though attenuated, is graceful; his features are fine, and his whole appearance such, as if once seen is never forgotten."

"How grateful to his ear would have been the language of his country!" cried Mrs. Belmont. "I would that I had had an opportunity of speaking to him."

"How doubly grateful breathed from such a being," said Malcolm, in a subdued tone.

"No flattery, Mr. Noel, I beg," replied Mrs. Belmont, with gentle dignity, meant to repress a something that displeased her in Malcolm's manner. "My

accent is nearer the native accent, than it is possible for the English (except in very rare instances) to acquire, and therefore, and therefore only, had it been delightful to his ear. Poor fellow," she continued, resuming her usual sweetness, " I fancy he could have joined us this morning on the subject of home both eloquently and feelingly."

Malcolm did not reply, he seemed struck dumb, and spoke but little more for the rest of the evening; and when Mrs. Belmont rose to depart, she pointedly requested Mr. Annesley to be her escort.

Mrs. Belmont, though forty years of age, scarcely looked more than thirty; and though her beauty had lost much of its brilliancy, and lightness, (for she had once, like Adela, been as aërial as the bride of Zephyrus,) she still retained the softer graces, much of the animation and all of the elegance of her earliest and happiest years. She was therefore still an object eminently calculated to awaken love, though all ideas on the subject had ever been as remote from her thoughts, and as foreign to her wishes since Mr. Belmont's death, as if she had completed her centennary. From the moment that left her sole guardian of her child, she resigned all the vanities of appearance. The only eye she cared to please was closed for ever, and preserving merely the proprieties, she renounced all he superfluities of dress.

Black silk and black velvet fashioned after the style of her country was her usual costume, and the only ornament she ever wore was a small gold cross. Her form was *en bon point*, but not so much so as to affect her height or invade the grace of her air or ges-

ture: and her countenance wore a paleness that was in perfect keeping with the *tout ensemble* of her appearance.

Such was Mrs. Belmont, and when we add to this the far more powerful charms that result from an elevated and elegant mind, from a gentle and excellent heart, we may forgive Malcolm Noel, though he had scarcely numbered half her years, yielding to her the dominion of his heart. Nothing is more easy than to make love to a vain woman, she invites, nay suggests all the common-place of gallantry, and kindly spares her lover the tedious circumlocution that is sometimes the prelude to "popping the question." Far otherwise is it with a woman like Mrs. Belmont, about whom there was that which Moore with some partiality attributes solely to his own country-women. She had—

" ————The wild sweet briary fence
Which round the flowers of Erin dwells,
That warns the touch, while winning the sense,
Nor charms us least when it most repels."

Malcolm therefore though long smitten, had not had the courage, (speaking in the lawyer's phrase) to *file his declaration*. His manner had gradually become more marked, and all the insignia of an incipient passion were soon betrayed in his conduct and discourse, but the object of it though by no means deficient in that intuitive apprehension, which is peculiar to the sex on that subject, secure in the disparity of their ages, and lamentably deficient in the article vanity, was very slow to attribute his attentions and prefer-

ence to any thing more than friendship, and the pleasure that springs from conversing with an informed and congenial mind. But at length Malcolm's *penchant* became palpably apparent, and Mrs. Belmont hoped to avoid the unpleasant *dénoument*, by assuming a reserve foreign to the affability of her nature. It was not however to be averted. The day following her visit to the Annesleys, Malcolm appeared after a sleepless night at Belmont Cottage—the flame that would no longer be smothered in silence burst forth, but only to be repelled. The calm dignity and good sense of Mrs. Belmont's reply effectually silenced all further appeal—her youthful lover felt that her determination was irrevocable as the dome of fate, yet he—

"Spoke not a word of sorrow."

With a silence more express than language, he pressed her hand, bowed, and withdrew; and the next morning took his departure for London.

## CHAPTER XII.

"As bees mix'd nectar draw from fragrant flowers,
So man from friendship, wisdom, and delight.
* * * * *
Good sense will stagnate; thoughts shut up want air,
And spoil like bales unopened to the sun.
Had thought been all sweet speech had been denied:
It ventilates our intellectual fires,
And burnishes the mental magazine,
Brightens for ornament and wets for use."

THE morning that followed the disclosure of Caroline's story, was brilliant as she could have wished it; and she rose in high spirits, looked out upon the blue sky and augured that all looked well for her project, for, like Richard, she would have held it an ill omen had the sun not come forth.

The breakfast parlour, whose large folding doors opened upon the garden, held that morning a singular assemblage of youth and beauty. Adela, Emilia, and Caroline wore their sweetest looks, the former tinged with a slight melancholy, which, however, like the moss round the rose only served to heighten her loveliness. Emilia had been wandering in the garden and—

-not Dian e'er
Came rosier from the woodland chase,"

than did the brilliantly beautiful Miss Auber when she came running to attend the summons to breakfast.

Caroline was her second self, with only this difference, she had more piquancy of humour, and less sweetness of expression. Seeton and Frederic were beaux worthy of the belles—

> "If hearts that feel, and eyes that smile,
> Are the dearest gifts that Heaven supplies."

And the worthy Sir Hubert Auber was much inclined to be of that opinion, he had circling round him the most

> "Sensitive hearts, and sun-bright eyes"

the world could afford: and he by turns whispered his admiration and delight to Lady Auber and the Captain. The latter however felt rather irksome, on the frequent repetition of the dose, for he was of the opinion of Mrs. Primrose, the good vicar's wife, "that handsome is what handsome does." He had never digested the circumstance of seeing Miss Belmont and his son in the gallery, on the first night of their arrival in town; he fancied Seeton was deficient in his attentions to Miss Egremont; a complaint he could not make against Frederic with regard to Adela; all these things festered his mind and soured his temper, so that it grew a remark with Sir Hubert that ill-health had made his brother "quite testy."

Breakfast was scarcely over, when a servant put a card into the baronet's hand, and in a few minutes the Honourable Mr. Chudleigh was announced. The simultaneous rising, the general and cordial greeting, announced he was a welcome visitor, and to none more so than to Captain Auber, who immediately

placed him a chair near Caroline, and taking another on the other side of him, began inquiries after the health of Mrs. Chudleigh (the gentleman's mother,) and a long list of his relatives. Caroline, whose nature (to her father at least) appeared perversity itself, soon vacated her seat, and coming round to Adela, whispered, that "Mr. Chudleigh was Emma's brother." Miss Belmont soon saw from the direction and expression of his eyes that he would willingly be something more to Caroline; and she guessed also from the manner of Captain Auber, that Mr. Chudleigh's suit met his approbation.

Caroline, whose mind had never wandered from her plan of the preceding night, began to meditate an exit with Adela from the breakfast room ; but, alas!

> "The wisest schemes of men and mice
> gang aft awry."

The subject on the tapis was an excursion to Richmond ; the day was fine, and not too hot, for there was a delightful air stirring. Frederic, who carried every thing with a *coup de main*, undertook to superintend the arrangements, Lord Milsom came in as a powerful auxiliary, and Caroline found herself carried away by the current, *nolens volens*.

"We will storm your father's castle, my lord," said Emilia, alluding to the Earl of Errol's seat at Richmond.

"I fear you will find it ill prepared," replied he, smiling. "I mean not in point of defence, for what garrison could hold out against such besiegers ; but I mean with regard to entertainment. You know my

father has long retired from the world and is almost a hermit."

"Then here is one who is just in a mood to take counsel at his holy shrine," said Seeton, waving his hand towards Caroline, "for she looks as if she was repenting all the mischief she had done in her life."

Mr. Chudleigh advanced, and taking her hand inquired in a voice of so much tenderness if she was ill, or if any thing had happened to distress her, that Adela was hurt for him, when she saw her turn coldly away with only a slight inclination of her head. When they retired like the rest of the ladies to equip themselves for the excursion, she gently reproved her for it; but Caroline defended herself from the charge by observing—

"You cannot be too cold to the man you do not mean to encourage; and I believe you can guess what chance Harry Chudleigh has with me. There is that indefatigable monster, Frederic," she continued, as the high and joyous tones of her brother's voice met her ear. "He'd get a yatch though he went to *Yemen* for it!"

"And you do not blame him," cried Adela, with a somewhat arch expression in her eyes, "for a temper so similar to your own! Heaven preserve the object of your confederated operations; whatever were your designs, escape would be impossible."

"It would be, 'Neck or nothing and company,' I suppose you think," cried Caroline, trying to rally.

On their going down stairs they found Colonel Melville and his daughter added to the party they had left. Adela was presented to them, and while the

Colonel with the assistance of his glass was examining her face, his daughter did her the honour of addressing her.

"I saw you in the park the other morning with that fellow?" cried she, nodding with the knowing air of a jockey, and pointing with her whip at Frederic.

"Probably, madam," replied Adela, surprised and disconcerted at her manner.

"Ah! I remarked you were the prettiest woman in there," she resumed, lashing her boot with her whip, an appendage she was seldom without, especially of a morning. "You've an uncommonly pretty figure for a habit." She spoke in so loud a tone that every person in the room were as much in possession of what she said as the one she addressed, and Adela felt her situation very awkward. "I never saw you before. I suppose this is your first visit to London?" she added abruptly. Adela replied in the affirmative—

"Ah! I thought I'd never seen you before; and Finley said you were quite a new face," cried the fair and confident catechiser.

Captain Auber, infinitely to Adela's relief, now approached, and endeavoured to press Miss Melville into the party to Richmond; but she pleaded a multitude of engagements, and telling her papa she was ready whenever he was, the Colonel immediately rose, and they made their bows; for Miss Melville withdrew more with the air of an accomplished sportsman, than of a woman of fashion, to say nothing of delicacy.

Every thing in this excursion was new to Adela, and she forgot all that had ever given her pain, as

they passed along the bosom of the silver Thames. Even Caroline seemed to lose her chagrin, while contemplating the beauties of its verdant banks which increased as they approached Richmond. A tone of the happiest, sweetest feeling, pervaded a large majority of the party, and they were received by the old Earl on their arrival at his mansion with the kindest welcome.

"Our ancient monarchs had taste when they fixed their residence here," said Secton, as they began their wanderings through the beautiful scenes of Richmond.

"Perhaps," observed Mr. Chudleigh, "the etymology of the word may be traced from that circumstance, *rich* and *monde* meaning, when put together, *the rich world,* an appellation equally applicable to its natural and civil advantages."

"No," replied Mr. Auber, "the name is not older than Henry the Seventh, who called it so from that district of Yorkshire which gave him the title of Earl. But your idea may still hold good, for in some respects it is applicable to both places. This place was formerly called *Sheen,* which signifies in Saxon, bright or shining, and it is still to my ear an expressive word, though we seldom meet it now but in Scotch poetry, or pieces that affect the quaintness of the old style."

"Obsolete words, are like the poor devils in a condemned regiment," observed Frederic; "when once they get into such company you hear no more of them."

"This place was also the residence of Edward the First, the conqueror of my country," cried Adela,

"and the destroyer of her bards. Here his heart has palpitated in horrid triumph over the memory of his deeds of blood: here perhaps he meditated with savage joy over the fate of the noble Wallace! And *he* is called the English Justinian!"

"The world," replied Seeton, "looks only to gross results, it weighs neither means nor motives: if the aggregate of a man's actions are brilliant and successful, it takes little heed of the details which made them such."

"No," said Caroline, "those delicate little investigations are left to the circle of dear private friends; who the moment they have the felicity of finding a hole in the mantle of character, poke their fingers into it, (merely from the *laudable* spirit of inquiry,) till the breach is irreparable."

"Your indignation against Edward the First, Miss Belmont," cried Captain Auber, who was a true disciple of legitimacy, and who, as Grattan said of Burke, would not sleep easy upon his pillow, unless he thought the king had a right to take it from under his head;—"your indignation against our first Edward may appease itself in reflecting on the fate of the Second."

"You mistake Miss Belmont much, sir," interrupted Frederic, warmly, "the sufferings of the son do not the less awaken the pity of a heart like hers, because he sprung from a cruel father."

Lord Milsom saw displeasure gloom the Captain's brow at Frederic's warmth, and anxious to change the subject, and by that means dissipate unpleasant feelings, observed—

"This is a spot rich in recollection. Here the turbulent Henry breathed his last, and here the proud prerogatived Elizabeth wandered with Essex. Here Shakespeare sometimes visited his august mistress, and perhaps conceived among its shades some of those beautiful creations of his wondrous mind."

"It is a rule with me," cried Caroline, "never to praise Shakespeare."

"Why?" inquired Mr. Chudleigh, "not, I am sure, because you do not admire him."

"Simply," she replied, "because every body does. I loathe the namby pamby I have so often been obliged to listen to about him, from those who can no more appreciate his beauties, than an owl can the splendour of the sun."

"Our worthy sister," observed Frederic, aside to Seeton, "is in a most devilish bad humour to-day," and then turning to her with a provoking affectation of silliness exclaimed—"He was a *very pretty* writer, Miss!"

Adela laughed, and Frederic's spirits seemed to become from that moment uncontrolably buoyant. He loved Miss Belmont, and had done so from the first moment he beheld her, but no favourable opportunity had offered for declaring himself. His character never led him to look on the gloomy side of the picture of life, therefore every project that fancy sketched was ever coloured by the rosiest hues of hope. Such was the present case. Impressed with no contemptible opinion of his own merits, he flattered himself he should not find her immoveable; he felt

certain of the co-operation of Caroline; and as for his father, as he had hitherto escaped entanglement from "his ill-omened machinations," (by which term he always designated the Captain's spirit of match-making) he trusted to get happily married in spite of him. He had no scruple, if it should be necessary, of "stealing a march," and taking the beaten path of the North Road. To Frederic nothing seemed difficult or impossible till he proved it such, so that his expectations continued sanguine to the very verge of disappointment.

If Adela's memory had not recurred to some days spent in North Wales, she might have regarded this as the sweetest of her existence. The balmy air; the breathing scene, which diversified by wood and water, sun and shade in every exquisite variety, seemed like "a part of heaven dropped on earth;" the beings that surrounded her, who with all the graces of the *beau monde*, had much warm and generous feeling, and unaffected vivacity; the perpetual vicinity of Seeton Auber, whose attentions, too delicate to excite observation, were nevertheless unceasing, threw a halo of happiness round her heart sweet and gentle as her own nature.

The repose of the Earl of Errol's drawing-room after dinner was not unwelcome to the fair visitants, who threw themselves on to the couches with some acknowledgments of languor and fatigue.

"Who is this young lady I have had the honour of being introduced to, to-day?" said the Earl, addressing Seeton, as soon as the ladies withdrew.

"Her name is Belmont," replied Mr. Auber; "her family is I believe good, but I know little more than that she was born in Wales."

"Many years ago," continued his lordship, "perhaps as much as three or four and twenty, I knew a gentleman of that name, and this young lady is the very prototype of his wife. I was so happy as to render him a service. It was during a short stay I made at Florence.

"Florence!" eagerly repeated Seeton. "Mrs. Belmont is a Florentine."

"Then I have no doubt it is the same," cried the Earl. How singular that I should recognize the resemblance at this distance of time! It proves the vigour with which we receive impressions in early life, since amidst all the dilapidations of old Time, he seems to have very little effect on our recollections of that period. Is Mr. Belmont living?"

"No, my lord. From what I have been able to gather he met the fate of most men of talent. Genius, like incense, gives not forth its sweetness but in self-consuming flames."

"Ah! he espoused a strange set of opinions, which occasioned a coolness between us," said Lord Errol, "or else I admired him very much, and seldom enjoyed the society of any one more than I did his. He was designed for something great, Mr. Auber. He would have filled any station with honour, but there was some foul play on the part of others, and much folly on his own, that forbade the accomplishment. Mrs. Belmont still lives?"

"Yes, my lord, she has survived the wreck, and is still a lovely interesting woman.'

"That I can believe," said his lordship. "Poor thing! she was in great trouble when she left Florence!"

The rest of the gentlemen had been warmly engaged in a political dispute during the Earl's conversation with Mr. Auber, which was only interrupted by a summons to tea and coffee in the drawing room; the disputants rose to obey the *citation*, and the Earl leaning on Seeton's arm followed them.

Much to the gratification of his supporter, this worthy and venerable nobleman immediately advanced to Miss Belmont, and took her hand, saying—

"My dear young lady, I find I am not mistaken in a supposition which entered my mind the moment I beheld you. You are the daughter of an early and valued friend, whom I admired for his brilliant talents, and loved for his probity and worth: and I consider myself happy in having met with you."

Deep in his heart did Seeton rejoice in this circumstance, and this cordial friendliness which the Earl evinced towards Adela, well knowing the weight it would have with the world; and as deeply was he charmed, as with perfect self-possession, easy grace, and glowing sensibility, she replied—

"To meet in your lordship a friend of my father's is a pleasure sweet as it is unexpected, and I shall number this day among the most honoured as well as the most delightful of my life."

During the remainder of the evening the Earl never

quitted his seat by the side of Adela, of whom he continued making inquiries respecting her mother, and with whom he appeared every moment more pleased. When they rose to depart he expressed his regret in terms the most flattering, and urged her making another and an early visit to Richmond.

"O! my lord, our visit to Derbyshire is not very distant," cried Caroline. "Your lordship will of course be at Milsom Park, and Miss Belmont will there find the leisure that London denies her."

"I must be content till then," replied the Earl, smiling good-humouredly, and he was again left to a solitude which had long excited the surprise of the circle in which he had once moved: for it was difficult for them to imagine how an occasional intercourse with a select few, and an extensive library, could be the voluntary choice of a nobleman of the Earl's fortune and influence.

## CHAPTER XIII.

"—————In servile weeds,
But yet of mien majestic. I observed him,
And ever as I gazed, some nameless charm—
A wond'rous greatness, not to be concealed,
Broke through his form."

" How graceful is the garb of wretchedness
When worn by virtue! Fashion's turns folly;
Their colours tarnish, and their pomps grow poor
To her magnificence"

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" I WISH I could do as the prime minister of Severus is reported to have done," said Caroline to Miss Belmont the morning after their excursion to Richmond.

" And what was that?" inquired Adela.

" Send heralds on before to make proclamation that no person should dare to meet us, or even look at us."

" I could almost imagine," rejoined Miss Belmont, " that the proud Duke of Somerset was lineally, or at least collaterally descended from that worthy minister, from the similarity of their humours."

"It is now my turn to inquire. Pray how did he shew his spirit of liberty and toleration?"

" It is said," replied Adela, " that he had a running footman who always preceded him, and one day meeting an obstinate countryman driving a pig, he

told him to get out of the way, for the Duke was coming, and he did not like to be looked at."

"O! don't he?" said the unconciliating boor. "But I'll look at him, and my pig shall look at him too," and with that he posted himself on the road side holding up his squeaking companion by the ears."

"Well," cried Caroline laughing, "I trust we shall meet none equally determined to stare at us; and heaven forefend there should be any one at Selby's that I know; for another interruption would craze me!"

The fates were propitious, and the two friends reached the *magazine des modes* uninterrupted. Miss Auber, as she had insisted on doing, gave instructions for both dresses, and then hurried away, merely whispering Adela, that she would be sure to find her in Grosvenor Square.

Adela requested Mrs. Selby to have a hackney-coach sent for, and then threw herself into a chair to yield to an indescribable melancholy that came over her, which was only interrupted by the vehicle rolling to the door. For the first time in her life she was alone, and left to act for herself, whatever might occur, and the timidity of her nature filled her with indefinable apprehensions. She threw herself back in the coach and drew her bonnet down over her face to prevent any chance of her being recognised, yielding herself up to reflections which flew from London to Wales, and from Wales to London with the rapidity of light. At last the coach stopped with a sudden jolt, and rousing herself from her reveries she began to anticipate the result of her visit, supposing she had

reached her place of destination: but it was nothing more than a casual obstruction of the way. As she sat waiting with some impatience the moment when she might again move on, two persons of whom she could see nothing, but the tops of their hats, stopped in conversation close by the coach door.

"And where is your brother now?" said a voice which she instantly recognised as Malcolm Noel's. Her first impulse was to make herself known and inquire after her mother, but a moment's reflection was sufficient to restrain her, and she shrunk still closer into a corner of the coach as she heard a vulgar voice reply—

"Why sir, he's gone to *Boney Serious.*"

"That is in the neighbourhood of *Wellington* I should suppose," she heard Malcolm answer; and her imagination readily pictured the sly laugh with which the remark was accompanied, though it was too low to reach her ear.

"No, sir," said his companion with a shake of the head, which she could perceive from the motion of hat. -"It's in some of them there *Hindey Parts.*"

The coachman at that moment cracked his whip, and the poor hacks were again a-stir; and in spite of the rumbling of the machine in which she was enclosed, and the noise of the streets, Adela relapsed into her meditative mood. The characters to whom she had been introduced since her arrival in London, passed in review before her. The first and most conspicuous among these was Sophia Egremont, the destined bride of Secton. It may naturally be supposed there was little predisposition in the mind of

our heroine to behold her with a favourable eye; but under any circumstances Adela would soon have penetrated the superficial veil that shrouded the deformities of her character. It is easier, says a shrewd observer of men and manners, to hide a thousand pounds than a hole in your coat; poverty soon becomes apparent, even with those who are adepts in putting the best leg foremost, how much sooner with those, who, like Adela, never dream of disguising the real state of affairs. Miss Egremont soon ascertained that her circumstances were humble, that she had no expectations, no connections, and treated her accordingly.

Adela had yet to learn from the heartless intercourse of the world, that poverty is loathed as a crime, and shunned as a contagion. Judging from her own heart, she imagined the greater the distress, the more deep would be the sympathy it would excite among mankind: and with an unconsciousness that it would diminish her one iota in the estimation of those who surrounded her, she discovered to every one who took the trouble to draw her out, her unallied and portionless situation. Among those who had been the objects of this ingenious artless line of conduct, scarcely one did credit to the unsophisticated goodness of the inexperienced heart from which it sprung. In Miss Egremont it excited contempt, and sunk Adela far below the level of her notice. Lady Ruthven, a heartless woman, but possessed of strong sense, and some powers, smiled at her folly, and sneered at her easy assumption of the insignia of a rank she was not destined to fill Mrs. Saugrober, who,

after herself, loved nothing on earth but her niece, and valued nothing but money, perfectly coincided with the sentiments of the two former ladies. But in this, though there was much to annoy, and to distress Adela, (as circumstances must daily bring her in contact with these individuals,) the evil went no further: far otherwise was it with the designs which instantly took possession of Lord Egremont's mind, who, captivated by the charms of her person, and the graces of her manner, rejoiced to learn that she was poor and unprotected.

Of all Adela had yet seen, Emilia Auber was the one to whom her heart most fondly and immediately attached itself: as in the instance of her love for Seeton, she found herself borne down by the impulse of an instantaneous and involuntary impression. An irresistible infatuation in favour of both seized upon her mind; but both were equally unconscious of its existence; prudence and suspicion served to keep up the reserve Mr. Auber had assumed, though he could not retain his coldness: and Miss Auber, occupied with the preparations for her marriage, and ever attended by Lord Milsom, had little opportunity of cultivating her acquaintance.

To Caroline however she still remained attached. She was the sister of Seeton, and had many noble traits of character; but her temper was hasty and capricious, and her humour frequently virulent and sarcastic: Adela feared her, and felt hers the last bosom in which she could repose confidence, or seek for sympathy.

When the coach again stopped, it was before the

door of a shabby house not far from Temple Bar, and a frame containing miniatures garnished a small and dirty window. The door was opened by a large red-faced woman, dressed in a black gown and white apron, who in reply to the inquiry whether the artist was at home, which Adela had instructed the coachman to make, answered with a strong Irish accent—

"O! and I belave he is too."

Miss Belmont alighted, and followed this daughter of Erin into the parlour.

"Rin, Robert Laggon," exclaimed she, addressing her son, "and see if Mr. Clarence is above, and tell him a lady wishes to spake to him."

The boy, who had all the timidity about him which is the result of ill-usage, flew to obey the command, but he had scarcely reached the stairs when he was recalled with the voice of Stentor.

"Robert! Robert, come back I say."

He returned instantly, but his attitude was that of a crouching dog who expected punishment.

"Ye'll shet the door after ye anither time," cried his mother grasping his ear; and then flinging him out of the room, she slammed the door after her in a manner that made Adela start.

"I am sorry, my dear," cried our heroine, addressing the child, "to have been the cause of your committing a fault that has subjected you to such punishment," but the boy half sullen, half bashful, made her no reply, but softly opening the door, slipped through a space scarcely large enough to admit a mouse, and made his exit. In a moment after his mother re-

turned, and with a mixed expression of humility and satanic malignity in her countenance, curtsied to Miss Belmont as she said—

"Indade ma'am, I am sorry to inform you Mr. Clarence is not at home," and immediately her eye, which was at once sly and ferocious, scrutinized Adela as if she sought to penetrate her soul. Embarrassment was sufficiently visible in the countenance of one who anxiously wished her commission at an end, feeling the inconveniences attendant on it; indeed she was half tempted to return immediately to Caroline, and intreat her to think of some other means of administering to her lover's necessities; but she was too generous to entertain such a thought long.

"Do you expect Mr. Clarence shortly?" inquired Adela.

"O! I'll engage he'll not be long," said Mrs. Laggon. "He never is."

"Have I then your permission to wait a few minutes?"

"To be sure, and with a thousand welcomes. Is there any thing you'd like to take, Miss?"

"Not any thing I am obliged to you," was the reply. At that moment the boy re-entered the parlour, and sideling up to his mother whispered something in her ear. Her countenance, which at first exhibited a species of stupid absorption, as she listened to the purport of the whisper, gradually gained a sneering malignity, and then a blazing fury, and darting out of the parlour, the door of which she left wide open, Adela heard her descend the kitchen stairs with a

heavy tramp, and commence the following strain of invective, which was at first uttered in that low drawling tone of malignancy, which (to use the very forceful idea of Coleridge,) "is to the ear, what the paleness of anger is to the eye."

"Indade! and ye're rading are ye, ye dirty drab? Och! and had'nt you better step up to the parlour, and discourse us your larning."

"I have ready'd the place ma'am," replied the gentle accents of a young and female voice, and whose brogue discovered her to be the countrywoman of her task-mistress, "and when her work is done I thought any slave might rest."

"Rest! and why should you rest?" exclaimed the incensed Mrs. Laggon. "Don't I pay ye your wages, and give ye your fading? Bad luck to you, and you call this claening do ye? Down on your dirty joints and do it over agen ye lumberdust by the time I come back."

Adela pitied from her soul the unhappy victim of this savage woman, and she could not but wonder that a boy who evidently suffered much from the violence of her nature, should be instrumental in subjecting another to it; for it was evident he was the tell-tale who had produced the mischief.

"I'll engage," exclaimed Mrs. Laggon returning to the parlour, "that your thinking what a mane vulgar cratchure I am to be making this botheration. I'm proud and imparious sometimes, but what o'that? I have that which may make me proud and imparious. *I* didn't come here without a shoe to my fut!" and

she kept walking about with a lofty air, and a duplex motion of the head, which consisted in perpetually turning it from side to side, and nodding at the same time.

Adela, perfectly alarmed at her situation, was anxious to be gone, and rising from her seat, said—

"If what you have been saying ma'am implies an apology, permit me to say it is unnecessary. I have already trespassed too much, and I will hasten to wish you good morning."

"Och! now and will you be going away?" cried Mrs. Laggon in a whining tone. "I know I'm a bad timper, and that's the warst my warst inimy can say o' me, and I'm sorry after when I think I've ill used a poor cratchure; and that I've done just now perhaps —but niver mind. I'll engage I shall be the loser! Judy 'll have a new gown for this."

Novice as Adela was in the world, and slow to penetrate character, this last speech did not deceive her for a moment. No ray of generosity ever lingered in the tiger-like eye of Mrs. Laggon, no line of feeling or good humour ever marked her doggish mouth: and bitterly did Adela lament she could not rescue that mild-voiced girl from her power.

"You don't spake Miss," again resumed Mrs. Laggon. "You're thinking ill of me, I'll engage."

"It is impossible," replied Miss Belmont, "that I can enter into the merits of the case."

"Och! no matter, no matter!" and she resumed her nervous walk or rather *prowl* about the apartment. Just then her son exclaimed—

"O! mother, here is Mr. Clarence."

"And why don't ye rin and open the door, fool?' was her reply.

The next moment Clarence entered the passage, he was bowing *en passant* to the half obsequious, half ironical curtsey of his landlady, when she cried—

"Ah! now see what your like to lose by passing without spaking a word to me. Here's a young lady been waiting for you this half hour, I'll engage."

"A lady!" he ejaculated, and in his flushed cheek and brightening eye, as he entered the parlour Miss Belmont easily discerned that he had expected to see Caroline; for his eye saddened the moment he beheld her, and as he bowed profoundly the colour fled and left his cheek pale as marble. Had Adela not known his story, she could not have viewed him without emotions of interest and admiration. His clothes were worn, much worn, but they were in good order; his voice was low, but not weak nor tremulous; his air was melancholy, but not humble. He seemed one whose spirit might be broken, but not bent.

Adela felt for a moment at a loss how to begin, so many thoughts and feelings hurried through her mind; but seeing an anxiety to know the import of her visit gather on his brow, she said in a voice whose tones of sweetness emanated from a heart deeply touched by his situation—

"I have seen some miniatures, the execution of which I admire, and I wish to have mine taken; will it be inconvenient for me to give you the first sitting this morning?"

Mrs. Laggon, who had not thought proper to withdraw, stood aside mimicing Adela's manner, whose carriage and conduct, unpretending as she was, threw her to an immeasurable distance, and for which as well as for the high crimes of being young and beautiful, she was incurring the hatred of a being who stood alone in perfidy.

" Certainly not, madam," replied Clarence, "allow me the honour of conducting you up stairs."

Adela followed him to a large, and almost empty room on the second floor, and as she did so, first felt the unpleasantness, if not the impropriety of her being unattended. As soon as he had placed a seat for her, he rung: a light step answered the summons, and in the inquiry—" Did your honour ring?" Adela distinguished the same voice she had before heard from the kitchen.

" A glass of water if you please, Margaret," said Clarence.

" Is that the servant of the house?" asked Adela.

" It is madam," he replied, "and she realises all that has been said of the virtues of her country people. If ever the milk of human kindness flowed in the breast of woman it does in hers. She is the very spirit of charity, gentleness, and feeling."

He spoke with a fervour that made Adela fancy it sprung in part from gratitude, and that this poor girl, humble as she was, had found the means to serve him; but it had been but in the kindness of her manner, and that was much to the lonely and the aching heart of him who received it.

The girl returned and presented the glass to Clarence, who evidently appeared as if he wanted refreshment; and as Adela saw the glass raised to his feverish lips, saw the unaffected and manly submission to a rigorous destiny that characterized his air, she felt the tears in spite of every effort course each other down her cheeks. She turned to the window to hide her emotion, and seemed to be busied with a book that lay on the seat; but her attention was not one moment withdrawn from the objects that so deeply interested her; and she heard the servant whisper—

"The laundress is below, sir."

"Tell her," replied Clarence, in a tone which, subdued as it was, was still full of agony, "Tell her she may depend on me in a day or two."

The girl was quitting the room, when Adela turned round, saying—

"I wish you would favour me also with a glass of water.'

"In a thought, madam," cried the willing and cheerful creature, and there certainly was not room for many ere she returned. Miss Belmont sipped the water, as her asking for it was little more than an excuse to be able to give the poor girl something, and returning the glass she slipped a guinea into her hand.

"Och! many thanks to your ladyship, no."

"But I intreat you will accept it," said Adela with earnestness, "receive it as an earnest of the interest I feel in your sorrowful situation—my estimation of your amiable nature."

"Och! madam, what is it I see?" cried Margaret, as the tears again filled Adela's eyes. "It is long since a drop of pity, or words of kindness have flowed to me!" and her own glistening eye spoke the sensibility of her soul.

"O! don't stay bothering here," the Stentorian voice of Mrs. Laggon was heard, exclaiming, "go yoursilf and spake to him, he don't expect ye wash his dirty duds for nothing I suppose; and, hark ye, sind that laggering bundle of rags, Judy, down to me."

A step was now heard ascending the stairs, and Clarence's cheek became if possible still paler. Margaret no longer rejected the guinea, but kissing the hand that presented it, flew down stairs, and took the importunate laundress with her. Adela knew the destination of her guinea, she had read the intention in Margaret's blue eyes, and she mentally thanked Heaven that she had made her the instrument of saving the aching heart of the ill-fated Clarence an additional pang.

"Madam, I fear you are unequal to the task of giving me a sitting this morning," said Clarence, evidently regaining composure with the descending steps of the dunning laundress. "You look faint and exhausted."

In truth, Adela felt so, but she knew if the picture was not commenced, she would have no pretext for leaving a deposit, which Caroline had told her she might safely do, as it was customary. Recalling therefore her shattered spirits, she assumed a tone of some cheerfulness, and begged him to commence.

Every idea of the inconveniences, or chances to which she had exposed, or might expose herself, vanished from Adela's mind; no thought occupied her soul, no feeling thrilled her heart that had not some reference to the unfortunate Clarence, and the probably still more unfortunate Margaret. It was true the former had feelings quickened by cultivation, which were laid bare to the quick; but he had some hour when he could shut out the world, and indulge the bitterness of his soul in solitude. He could return the proud look of the supercilious pride that scorned him, and grapple with the ills of fate: but she, poor helpless girl, was a domestic drudge 'mid whose unceasing toils there never rose a sabbath; she was a slave to whom the liberty of thought even would, if possible, have been denied; she had no resource but passive submission to her hard lot. Artificial refinement had not heightened her feelings; but she was evidently one of those, who come from the hands of nature with a vivid sensibility, and every day of her toil-worn life she bled at every pore. Never had Adela felt the ills of poverty till now; she had beheld all that a lavish expenditure could collect to adorn and to delight the beautiful Emilia Auber, without a thought, without a wish for one bauble. Perfect contentment with her narrow fortune had ever blessed the placid current of her sequestered life; and when she quitted it, to mix in the gay circles of fashion and pleasure, the same acquiescent contentment still marked her feelings. No desire for wealth, no idea that its possession would add to her happiness, ever glanced into her mind. But now no other

thought had room; to have been able to do all her young and generous heart dictated for these victims of a wayward fate, had been the *acmé* of happiness.

"How feeble, madam, are the efforts of art in imitating nature," observed Clarence, as he endeavoured to catch the lines of a countenance, enriched with expression from the fountain of a heart, noble as the first that beat in paradise, e'er sin was known.

Adela felt the compliment implied, but not expressed, and rising soon after, she observed—

"I wish this miniature to be finished in the first style, therefore let your demand be regulated accordingly. What hour shall I attend you to-morrow for another sitting?"

"Any hour you please, madam," said Clarence; "or, shall I wait on you?"

"O! no," cried Adela earnestly, from the consciousness of the impossibility of such a plan, "I will be here at twelve." Then drawing a note from her pocket-book she presented it to him, saying, "I shall be punctual."

"Stay madam," said Clarence, "I fancy you are under some mistake—this is ten pounds, which will be the utmost charge of the miniature."

"It is immaterial," said Miss Belmont, "I have none smaller about me. Good morning." And she hastened down stairs, attended by Clarence. Mrs. Laggen opened the street door, and Adela shrunk from her with horror as she passed her. "Grosvenor Square," said she to the coachman, as she past into the carriage, and then bowing, with a smile radiant as light to Clarence, who still stood at the door, she drove away.

When Adela reached Lord Egremont's, she found the drawing-room full of morning visitors. Caroline was seated at one of the windows where she had been keeping watch with an anxiety which made every minute appear an age. Mr. Auber, with a countenance remote from any expression of pleasure, was standing beside Miss Egremont, who, seated on a splendid couch near which stood her harp, was telling him some tale that appeared to interest her much. Mrs. Saugrober sat at her back, as if listening to an oracle; and the rest of the company were scattered in various groups.

Every eye was turned on Adela as she entered; and never had she looked half so beautiful, for—

> "'Tis the mental medium it shines through
> That lends to beauty all its charms and hue."

That cherub-like innocence, that dove-like softness, and, above all, that total absence of all thought of self, which characterized her, blended this morning with a radiance of countenance that had its source in a glowing benevolence. She had left hope and peace, where all had been anxiety and distress; and she came forth with a spirit that embraced the whole human race as the kindred of her love, and she looked round her with an expression which seemed to say, "Whom shall I take to my bosom first?" But there were none there fitted to be received to that region of purity, where the passionless spirit of an angel new from heaven might have slumbered. A murmur of irrepressible admiration filled the room. Lord Egremont immediately advanced, took her hand and led

her to a seat, but she merely bowed in acknowledgment, and passed on to Caroline, whose hand she pressed with an expressive look.

From the moment of her entrance, Mr. Auber had ceased to understand or even hear a single word the fair Sophia was addressing to him; and soon after, unconscious of the appearance it must have to his mistress, and those who surrounded him, he walked entirely away.

"Cords round his heart were spun
That could not, would not be undone;"

and perplexities the most cruel occupied his thoughts.

"Who," cried he mentally, "is the blissful being who has kindled this radiant happiness in her soul? Who has dissipated the tender melancholy that fed my fruitless hopes?"

Miss Egremont's chagrin was too apparent to be hid, though she was no inglorious adept at disguising her feelings. Rising from her seat she passed Adela with proud scorn that fell harmless, for it was not perceived. Lady Ruthven's feelings were not very dissimilar, for Lord Egremont seemed to have lost all control over himself, and paid Adela the most extravagant compliments and the most marked attention.

The entrance of the beautiful Emilia, accompanied by Lord Milsom, and soon after Frederic, the Earl of Errol, and Captain Auber, gave a new turn to the thoughts and feelings of the company.

"The Earl of Errol!" was uttered in various tones of surprise by a variety of voices, and he was met by

congratulations on all sides, and, after replying to them with his usual urbanity, much to the amazement of all, and the mortification of some, he went up to Adela, and taking her hand drew a chair by her side as he said—

"You should set for your picture this morning." Adela smiled to think she had actually done so, as she replied—

"Why, my lord?'

"Because I would have your pr[illegible] beyond the chance of change."

"But where would your lordship seek the artist?" said Frederic. "What merely mortal pencil, guided by a merely mortal hand, could make such an attempt?"

"And what might not be the consequence of his rashness?" exclaimed Oscar Finley.

Adela finding the strain of compliment run high, rose from her seat, intending to rejoin Caroline, who in a mood of silence totally unlike herself had walked to the further end of the room: as she passed Miss Egremont's harp, part of her drapery touched the chords of the instrument which produced a sound.

"A challenge!" said Frederic, intercepting her, "you must indulge us with a song."

"Lord Egremont, whom the late arrivals had a little discomfited, seconded Frederic's request; the Earl, Oscar Finley, and several others joined; Seeton alone was silent. Even Captain Auber, on whom the Earl of Errol's mention of her father and attention to herself had had its full weight, was among the petitioners, observing to the Earl that "she sung like a

syren, and that he had repeatedly had the pleasure of hearing her when he had the happiness of residing near the amiable Mrs. Belmont, in Wales."

"O! my dear sir," cried Frederic, grasping his father's hand, with real pleasure, "you are a powerful auxiliary indeed!"

Borne down by a torrent it was fruitless to oppose, she seated herself at the instrument, and all, whose bosoms were not possessed with a legion of evil passions, gazed on the angelic sweetness of her face and the sylph-like graces of her form with rapture: but the brilliancy of her expression had faded, some thoughts had come over her mind which had saddened her spirit; but even this, so far from deteriorating the charm that hovered over her, added effect to the air she had chosen. There was, as Leigh Hunt would have said, a 'pin-dropped silence' as with tones of the richest melody, and the most thrilling sweetness, she sung the following words:—

"I may not tell the thoughts that steal
Too often o'er my pillow'd rest;
I may not breathe the hope I feel,
When Fancy tells me to be blest
I may not tell the form she shows,
The smiles with which she fills my train;
And least of all I dare disclose
The fears that chase those dreams again."

A brilliant symphony, gave liberty of respiration to those who did not dare to breathe while her voice vibrated, and all was ecstatic silence as she sung with increasing feeling and sweetness the concluding verse.

"But I may tell of wishes pure
As e'er to holiest hopes were given;
And I may tell of prayers I'm sure
That have their registry in Heaven;
For they were warmly breathed for one
From every taint of folly free.
O! be his fate one line of sun;
Leave all its sombre shades to me."

An audible sigh followed the last thrill of her voice, and rendered her insensible to the burst of [illegible] ments that was poured around he[illegible] prisoner had trembled from the b[illegible]eton, and found an echo in her own. Caroline soon after proposed their return to Russel Square, and as the mixed emotions of her heart ill accorded with the surrounding glittering scene, she gladly rose to accompany her.

"Stop! stop!" cried the Earl of Errol, "Miss Auber, what makes you in such a hurry? Augustus," he continued, addressing his son, "ring for the carriage. Let me have the pleasure of setting you down in Russel Square, ladies."

"Your lordship dines with Sir Hubert to day?" said Lord Milsom. His lordship replied in the affirmative.

"Ah! my lord," cried Emilia, "mamma is not a little distressed that she was not apprised of the honour you intended us. I do not know whom we shall have to meet you."

"Do not concern yourself about that, my love," said the Earl. "You know a plain family dinner in a plain family way is my choice."

Lord Egremont attended Adela to the carriage, as did Mr. Finley the dejected Caroline; the Earl followed; and the two gentlemen, having breathed many complimentary regrets, and bowed their adieus, returned to the drawing-room.

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## CHAPTER XIV.

> "The fears of love—sick fancy
> Perversely busy to torment itself." THOMSON.

ERE they had reached Russel Square, Adela had regained her spirits. The kindness of the Earl had a sensible effect upon her grateful heart, and his perpetual and honourable mention of her father turned it to the most pleasurable emotions, so that on retiring with Caroline to dress for dinner, she entered on the subject of her visit to Clarence with all the enthusiasm she would have done had it been broached on her first return.

"You saw him then, Adela?" said Caroline, in a voice low and anxious. "You're stay was very long I thought."

Adela recounted all that had passed, and what she had done, and Caroline appeared more satisfied.

"Now you have seen him," she continued with some of her usual energy, "tell me does he justify my preference? or has he disappointed you?"

"My dear Caroline," exclaimed Adela, "my heart was never so deeply touched before. His gentleness, his patience, his misfortunes, need not language to make them felt, he has a silent eloquence about him which is irresistible, and I could almost have exclaimed as I left him—

> "—Brother of my adoption! in the bond
> *Of every virtue wedded to my soul,*
> Enter my heart; it is thy property."

Adela did not see whither her enthusiastic sensibility was hurrying her; she had not penetration enough to discern that her return had not removed the anxiety of Miss Auber, but tinctured it with "a green and yellow melancholy." Our heroine had come back so different a creature from what she had been at Mrs. Selby's, that as Caroline gazed at her, she blamed her own imprudence in putting Clarence's love to such a test. She recollected with agony how ambiguous had ever been the expressions of his passion, and in the event of his devoting himself to another she would have nothing to complain of: the conduct that had left her free had preserved him so too.

"And when do you make another visit?" said Miss Auber in a tone of curiosity.

"To-morrow at twelve," ingenuously replied Adela.

"And how do you mean to manage it?" asked Miss Auber.

"My dear Caroline! you speak as if the affair was mine not yours. As to the means of going you know I depend entirely on you."

Blinded by the prejudice which had taken possession of her brain, Caroline appeared to herself the agent of her own undoing, and replied with some petulance—

"Then I assure you my invention is exhausted, and matters must rest as they do;" but the surprise of Adela, who had expected to find her all gratitude, and rapture, recalled her a little to herself, and she added, "I am unwell and uneasy—pray leave me, Adela, I would not distress you with my afflictions."

"This is most unkind," cried Adela, who softened when she heard her say she was unhappy; for though Adela could not penetrate the motives of her conduct, she had begun to feel hurt and offended. "If you are afflicted it is surely no time to leave you. What has happened to make you thus uneasy?"

The hand that lay fondly, and lightly on her shoulder, felt heavy and insupportable, and Caroline rose to relieve herself from it, saying—

"'Tis but a wayward humour, pray leave me, I shall be best alone."

Adela withdrew, and Miss Auber paced her dressing room, and thought and re-thought of the same things till her brain was all confusion. One moment she proposed to herself disclosing the whole affair to Seeton and seeking his agency, but Clarence was obscure of birth, poor and proscribed; not such the alliance Seeton would promote: for a moment she turned to Frederic—it was only for a moment. He

had all the folly, the rashness of nineteen; he would in all probability embroil every thing, and make mischief without intending it. "And were they," she mentally continued, "all that I could wish, what would be the result? Would not Clarence have as much cause as ever to preserve silence on the subject of our love? and if what he has felt for me is only gratitude, if the fatal beauty of another has waked a real passion in his soul, I should be but calling him into the sphere of her influence—no cold distinctions would rise between them—their fortune and their fate are much the same." Worked up to a fever of passion, she continued pacing her room till the sound of a neighbouring clock warned her that the dinner hour could not be very distant, and she hastened to the business of the toilet.

Adela, whose dressing had not occupied her long, to while away the time before dinner, stepped into the library, feeling in no mood to join the company in the drawing-room. She had nearly advanced to the table which stood in the centre, and on which lay an open volume of plates, before she recognized Mr. Auber; she started and blushed, and the consciousness that she did so, only deepened her confusion; and without reflecting on the singular appearance it must have, she was hastily retreating, when Mr. Auber as hastily stopped her.

"You fly me, Miss Belmont. You would have staid had you not been so unfortunate as to find me here. Do you command my absence?"

"I only came for a book," she replied, and willing to look any where rather than into the eyes that were

gazing on her, she fixed hers on a piece of paper which hung almost entirely out of a pocket-book he was holding in his hand. It was the note she had written to his sister immediately after the accident that introduced them to each other. He followed the direction of her eye, and his confusion became almost equal to her own; he sought to hide it in adjusting his papers, when the entrance of Captain Auber found them apparently the most guilty of detected pairs.

"Pray let me assist you in seeking the book you want," cried Seeton, endeavouring to speak with composure.

"Do not give yourself the trouble, sir, I shall find it in your sister's room perhaps;" and happy to make her escape she hastily retired. The Captain immediately closed the door, and advanced to his son with an air of the severest displeasure.

"Mr. Auber! Mr. Auber! what is the meaning of this? Is this the conduct you promised to observe? What mean these meetings with Miss Belmont?"

"These meetings as you term them, sir," was the reply, "have occurred but twice, and——"

"And how long," interrupted his father, "have you been in town? but I repeat again, sir, what do they mean?"

"Nothing, sir: they were both, on my honour, perfectly accidental. And any confusion you may have observed, arose merely from the consciousness that the circumstance of our being seen together, chance as it was, would be misconstrued."

"I imagined myself fortunate," resumed the Captain, paying little attention to his son's last observa-

tion, "in meeting in our retirement in Wales such a family as the Belmont's. I thought I had procured a companion for my daughter, as much a stranger to duplicity and statagem, as she was to the world; and from a being bred in such seclusion, I fancied I had nothing to fear from the machinations of artifice."

"Hold, sir!" exclaimed Seeton, "there is not that being on earth but yourself who had dared with impunity in my presence to question the purity of Miss Belmont's mind. She is too guileless, too artless; I see every hour of her life the unsuspecting ingenuousness of her nature betraying her to misconstruction and suspicion."

"And suppose such to be the case, sir?" warmly replied the Captain, "what am I to infer from your erecting yourself into her champion."

"The common zeal that every man must feel in the defence of calumniated innocence. Hear me once for all, sir, and let what I now say for ever silence your suspicions, even though appearances may arise against me. I should regard myself as the basest of mankind if after the long assurance I have given to herself and to the world, I broke my faith with Miss Egremont; I should regard myself the most ungrateful could I forget her father's exertions on my behalf in the late election, and his general tone of conduct towards me. Rest then satisfied and secure, that the day that sees the lady of age, sees the fulfilment of the engagement by which we are mutually bound."

"As I listen to you, Seeton," cried his father softening, "I cannot withhold my trust in your assur-

ances; but when I leave you, a thousand apprehensions again possess me. I have been lately speaking to Lord Egremont on the subject of abridging the term of your probation; for I shall never feel at peace till the marriage has taken place. Here is his lordship most apropos," continued the Captain, as the library door opened, and Lord Egremont entered.

"We were just now on the old subject, my lord," said he, addressing his noble friend, "the alliance with your lordship's family; and I have been condoling with my son, that the whim of Mrs. Saugrober should so long have stood between him and his happiness."

"My sister is a singular woman, Captain. The Dutch you know have an antipathy to early marriages; and all her notions are tinctured from her long residence among them. I believe she would have extended the term, if she had been permitted, four or five years longer. Hang me if she ought not to have lived in the time of the antidiluvian patriarchs, a man might then spare a few years out of his life; but now that we are reduced to a mere three-score and ten, and more than half of us never live to see that, moments are too precious to be thrown away, to say nothing of years. But the old lady must not be offended, and Auber," he continued clapping him on the shoulder, "bears it like a philosopher! I understand next week makes Lord Milsom a happy man. They spend the honey-moon in Derbyshire, at his lordship's seat near Matlock?"

"Your information is correct, my lord. Your lordship will be among the guests?" said Captain Auber.

"I am expected, and Sophia will be there of course, with her aunt. I suppose no member of your family will be absent?"

"Not one. We are in hourly expectation of the arrival of La Marquise de Pomenars from Paris," replied the Captain.

"What Sir Hubert's eldest daughter? pray does she bring her lord with her?"

"So I understand, and his daughter Adele."

"Ah!" observed his lordship, "she is a fine spirited girl. I saw a good deal of them when I was at Paris; they are people of great influence I assure you. Why your worthy brother manages well for his girls, don't he?"

"Ah! my lord," cried the Captain in a tone that expressed how truly he felt what he said, "he has a happiness that falls to few parents. His children make their own elections, and yet they are as wise and prudent, as if they acted under the guidance of age and experience. It is thus that fortune falls unsought into the lap of some! Sir Hubert, my lord, gives himself not an iota of trouble! To promote the interests of my children has been the science of my life; and, except in one happy instance," (and he bowed to Lord Egremont as he pointed to Seeton,) "I have found it one of difficulty, disappointment, and perplexity."

His lordship shrugged his shoulder in reply, and Seeton took the opportunity of making his bow. The Captain warmed by his subject, and relieved by his son's departure, continued—"You are aware, my lord, of my daughter's rejection of Lord Wilton?

Well! judge my indignation at finding the Honourable Mr. Chudleigh likely to meet the same fate!"

"On my soul it is too bad," cried his lordship, a little wearied.

"And there is Frederic," pursued the Captain, growing more and more interested in his subject, "it wants very little penetration to see that his way lays clear before him. If ever woman looked with a favourable eyè on man Miss Melville does on him. I represented this only as late as yesterday, as I have done often before; he went off like an explosion, you would have imagined I had fired a train. 'Vague fancies,' he exclaimed, 'that exist only in your own imagination—I detest Miss Melville—I have ever shunned her society—and ever shall. I am free as the wind of heaven, and will love but were I list.' All my hopes, views, and wishes, like a blasted mine were blown into confusion in an instant."

"Indeed, indeed," cried Lord Egremont, "your task is an arduous one. But is it not a piece of bad generalship, bringing this Alpine beauty to town with you?"

"My lord, such a woman is like a fire-ship, we see she brings destruction with her, but how is she to be avoided?"

"Very true," observed his lordship coolly, "but I think you may avert some of the mischief by circumspection. It strikes me she has made no light impression already on the heart of Frederic?"

"I feared as much," cried the Captain in a voice of bitterness.

"What views have her friends for her?" inquired

Lord Egremont. " She will never bear sitting down passively in Wales, after this introduction to life."

" Her face is her fortune, so I imagine her views and those of her mother's are directed to the usual point—matrimony."

" Ah ! lovely as she is, she may find herself disappointed. But she might make her fortune very easily, if she is not squeamish."

Looks more than words conveyed his meaning to Captain Auber, and in the same voiceless language they were replied to. " Hypocrisy is a homage vice pays to virtue," and villain addressing villain, even in the security of privacy, will rather imply, than express his meaning. These two mature sinners soon understood each other, and the sacrifice of innocence, was to draw still closer the bonds in which interest had already united them. Adela's mere removal from the world of fashion would never have given the Captain half the security which he felt in the present plan. Did she return to her mother in all the taintless innocence with which she left her, what hindered the impetuosity of youthful passion pursuing her to her retreat, and immolating interest and ambition at the shrine of love ? But when she had once stepped beyond the pale of virtue, though she might still disturb the fancy of his sons, the Captain knew she could not mar their fortune. Confident of mutual support and assistance, the gentlemen left the library to attend the summons to dinner. A large party was assembled, from which, however, the ladies of Lord Egremont's family were absent ; and seemingly much to his relief, for they all held a certain influence over him : his

daughter, that which a spoilt and only child frequently possesses; Mrs. Saugrober, that with which her wealth invested her—it was a chain, which though sometimes galling was nevertheless of gold, and he would not have broken one of the links, for the purest freedom being ever breathed. Lady Ruthven's power was very generally seen, but little understood: in fact, the object of a guilty passion during the life of Lady Egremont, she now expected the only reparation with which she would be satisfied. Their conduct had been sufficiently circumspect, to leave her reputation, though not wholly untainted by suspicion, sufficiently bright for the mixed scene of fashionable life, and she therefore wished to effect her aim by that quiet course which should give no handle to the busy tongue of slander. Lord Egremont, like all cowards,

"Willing to wound, but yet afraid to strike,"

preserved that doubtful, indecisive policy which neither promised the fulfilment of her hopes, nor yet threatened a rupture. In the first days of their adulterous intercourse, she had been the repository of all the secrets of a life of which "drinking, dicing, and other nameless excesses," formed the most innocent part; he therefore was fearfully in her power. He knew also that her passions were violent, and her powers were by no means contemptible; he therefore felt, he had not only armed her with weapons against himself, but he had placed them in hands willing and able to use them.

At dinner Lord Egremont seated himself next to

Adela, and devoted himself to her with an obtrusive gallantry, which was distressing to her as it made her an object of general observation, and as it precluded the possibility of her addressing or being addressed by any other person. Captain Auber occupied a place at the other side, and the only consolation she received from his vicinity, was finding by the urbanity of his manners, and the gentleness and kindness of the occasional attentions she received from him, that he retained no angry or unpleasant feelings from the circumstances of the gallery or the library. Thus she sat between two, (who, had their persons been as loathsome as their minds, had scarcely found reception in a lazar-house,) as unsuspicious as she was beautiful, for—

"Goodness thinks no ill
Where no ill seems."

She waited impatiently for the moment when the retirement of the ladies should release her; but Lord Egremont rose also, and accompanied them to the drawing-room.

Caroline, though rattling with all the violence of forced spirits, she remarked with pain had neither addressed her during the whole time of dinner, nor, as had ever been her custom, joined her when it was over; but Lord Egremont left her little time to think, or to observe any thing; and infinitely was she relieved when a servant bringing her a letter afforded her a pretext for retiring.

"Who is it from, Adela?" inquired Caroline, from a

feeling of irrepressible curiosity, and in a tone of affected gaiety as our heroine past her.

"From mamma!" she replied, with a look and voice so frank, that Caroline felt for a moment conscience-struck for the suspicions she had entertained.

It was a sultry July noon, or rather evening, and Adela retired to one of the shadiest spots of an extensive and beautiful garden, rich in all the luxuriant gifts of that prodigal season. Her mother's letter breathed all the depth and strength of feeling and tenderness, which a mind like Mrs. Belmont's infuses into every thing, and Adela was yet lingering over its reiterated fondness, when a shadow crossed a line of sunshine, that lay along the path before her: she looked up, and met the eyes of Seeton Auber fixed on her with melancholy softness; ere she could avert her own, he bowed and passed on.

A new train of thought was awakened, and she ran back with a truth, which proves how faithful is the memory of love, every evidence of passion he had ever given, and last not least came the treasured scroll which she had seen in his hand but a few hours before; she would have shunned a retrospection so fruitless and so improper to indulge: but Adela was the child of impulsive feeling, and as the conviction that her passion was returnèd deepened in her mind, her agony at the consciousness that it might never be acknowledged became intense, and dropping her mother's letter from her hands, she covered her face with them to shut out the beauties of a scene that mocked her misery.

She had just dropped her white hands listlessly into her lap as the paroxysm of feeling past off, when she started as a voice exclaimed—

"Miss Belmont, by my hopes of happiness!" It was Frederic Auber. "Oh!" he continued, darting forward, "the moment I have so long sought is now my own. Do not deny me that moment. I have much to say, and you must hear me," and he seized her hand to detain her. "Does it need the cold agency of language to tell you, what my eyes must long since have revealed? If it does, O! in what words worthy of my feelings can I express the homage my heart pays you."

"Mr. Auber you must release me. You cannot imagine how much you are distressing me."

"That I would not do for the world. O! that a minute so rapturous to me, should be painful to you. One word and I release you, my too beautiful captive, one word."

"Indeed, sir, you offend, even more than you distress me," and she struggled to withdraw her hand.

"O! Miss Belmont, the chilling coldness of your tone and manner paralyzes my heart; and chills the hope that your frankness, your sweetness, hitherto has led me to entertain."

"I had no intention, sir, of exciting either hope or fear, and I must insist that you let me pass."

"O! pardon me this violence," he supplicated, "forgive a rebellion against your commands, for which the strength of my passion must plead, which its fervour, its devotion, must palliate. If to adore you with the first ardours of an only love; if to hold you as

the sole arbitress of my future destiny; my pride in public, and my happiness in private life, is to be guilty; is to make me the wretch who merits, and is to feel the weight of your displeasure: then am I the most cursed of men. You are unmoved, Miss Belmont! Good God! you do not hate me?"

There was a boyish candour in his voice, language, and expression, a manly fire in his sparkling and ingenuous eyes—and it is more than probable that had not the fatal prepossession in favour of his brother filled her heart, she had not been insensible to the graces and merits of a youth so distinguished in mind and person. But there is no amulet like a deep and cherished passion for another. It is like the armour forged by Vulcan for Achilles, proof against all attack.

As Frederic passionately repeated, "Miss Belmont you do not hate me?" Adela collected her thoughts to reply with a coolness that can result only from indifference.

"No, sir, my feelings are as remote from hatred, as respect and good wishes can make them. I feel the honour you do me; and when I assure that gratitude is the only return I can make, I trust you will not by continuing or repeating the present language compel me to shun your society."

"Great heaven! how passionless, how unpitying!" he ejaculated, as he released her hand; but catching it again as he saw her ready to avail herself of the liberty of flight, he cried—

"And you can leave me thus Miss Belmont, without one look, one word! Do I forfeit you for ever? O! no, you would prove ere you reply to my feelings!

Indifference cannot shelter in the breast of a being like you. My adored Miss Belmont, assign me the term of my probation, and suffer me to prove how light I deem the penance, however severe, by which I win you;" and dropping on his knee he passionately kissed her hand, and again uttered a rhapsody too incoherent to be replied to; breaking from him she did not pause till she reached her own room, and she had then the mortification to discover that she had lost her bracelet (one of the pair presented her by Emilia) and had left her mother's letter behind her.

Unwilling to meet Frederic again that evening, and equally desirous of seeing no more of Lord Egremont, she determined to spend the remainder of the evening by herself. Her letter and bracelet she thought it likely Frederic would take the trouble to restore her, and she had seated herself to write to her mother, when the sweet and smiling Emilia Auber came in search of her.

"Why we are all in despair about the loss of you below," cried that amiable girl, "and I am commissioned to bring you back."

Adela laid aside her writing, and putting her willing arm through Miss Auber's, returned to the drawing-room, at the door of which Lord Egremont met them, and said in a low voice—

"Miss Auber is my better angel! how could you have the cruelty to forsake us?"

Miss Belmont saw as she advanced up the room, that there had been new arrivals during her absence. Lady Ruthven and Mrs. Saugrober were seated at a card table, and Miss Egremont was in the midst of a

knot of young ladies, from whom, while Adela remained in their vicinity she heard the following remarks:—

"Very mysterious!"

"Very improper!"

"Certainly, very improper, highly improper!"

"From Selby's did you say?"

"In a hackney coach." And all this was accompanied with shrugs, nods, and looks, *ad infinitum.*

It immediately occurred to Adela that they were canvassing her adventure of the morning; though how they got possession of the story, the construction they would put upon it, or the publicity which they would give it under a variety of ingenious forms, (for her peace' sake,) she was happily ignorant.

The case was, she had not long left Mrs. Selby's, when Miss Egremont arrived An accidental mention that Miss Auber and Miss Belmont had just been ordering dresses, led to a series of inquiries, which developed the circumstance, that the latter left there alone, and in a hackney coach; one of the scandalizing coterie to whom the incident was afterwards related by the weak and mean-souled Miss Egremont, confirmed the statement by assuring her friends, that she saw Miss Belmont alight from a hackney coach, at his lordship's in Grosvenor Square; so all that and that was put together, the time between her leaving the dress-makers and arrival at Lord Egremont's computed, and what she could be doing, or could have gone about, conjectured according to the fancy of every pretty Miss that belonged to the *Cabal.* In the midst of this "cogibundity of cogitations," ano-

ther of the young fry burst into the knot of mischief, exclaiming—"O! what do you think? something so delightful?" Inquiries pressed her on every side, and when she had tantalized curiosity a little, she cried—

"The dear, good, sweet, old Earl of Errol is going to give a masked ball at his seat at Richmond!"

"O dear! when?" every one asked at once.

"In a month or five weeks; at least, as soon as he returns from Derbyshire."

Heavenly! Delightful! Enchanting! flowed from all sides; in fact the run upon the adjectives was great enough to occasion a bankruptcy in any language however copious.

When Adela retired that night, she painfully felt the coolness of Caroline; she had been accustomed always to retire with her, and they thus spent some time, some moments at least together, before they went to bed. Hurt, if not offended, yet without any definite charge to bring against her, she went to her own room, but she was not long there, when Caroline herself appeared, with an air not wholly unrestrained, but glossed with such a show of good humour that Adela thought no more of all that had past, nor did she perceive what had been the sole purport of the visit even when Caroline asked to see Mrs. Belmont's letter, for our heroine with the characteristic openness of her nature had always been in the habit of showing them. This of course she in the present instance could not do, and she told Caroline she had lost it in the garden. Never had she doubted Adela's veracity before, she believed her incapable of falsehood; but this assertion appeared so improbable that

she did not give it an instant's credit. She felt the rush of all her dormant suspicions come back over her brain, and merely saying it was no matter, she hastened to vent her feelings in her own room. Had she stayed, Adela would have cleared the mystery; as it was, she fancied she had, "confirmation strong as holy writ" of all her fears had pictured. She recapitulated to herself, with the same precision that a judge might have done to a jury in a cause of life and death, the whole evidence of the day. She recalled Adela's looks of delight on the receipt of the letter, her haste to leave the room, her long absence from it, Emilia's finding her writing, (for she had taken care to make every inquiry,) and lastly her refusal, contrary to her established habit, to show the letter.

"Clarence! perfidious and ungrateful Clarence!" she exclaimed, "Is it thus that you requite me?"

> "Alas! how light a cause will move
> Dissention between hearts that love!
> Hearts that the world in vain has tried,
> And sorrow but more closely tied,
> That stood the storm when waves were rough
> Yet in the sunny hour fall off—
> Like ships that have gone down at sea,
> When heaven was all tranquillity."

## CHAPTER XV.

"When fearful doubt has past away
How welcome comes the dream again,
That hope still sketches day by day
To soothe the heavy pulse of pain."

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A LETTER from Clarence the next morning brought peace to the perturbed bosom of the self-tormenting Caroline. Every line breathed the same ardent gratitude, the same sacred community of thought and feeling which had marked all his former letters. He mentioned the circumstance of Adela's visit, and alluded to her sweetness and sensibility in a manner which showed they had made no other impression than that which the purest honour might sanction. As reason gained her proper ascendency, and the conflict of passion subsided, Caroline saw that had Clarence deserved the suspicions which she had entertained towards him, he would never have named Adela at all; and it was a convincing proof also how pure and how perfect was the confidence he reposed in her. Relieved from the burden that had oppressed it, her heart felt from the effect of contrast truly happy. Her love, like a current which having met some accidental obstruction is suddenly suffered to seek its usual channel, flowed with new force towards Clarence. Her friendship for Adela revived in all its pristine newness,

and she hastened to seek her; but the consciousness of having so grossly wronged her, tinged Caroline's manner with some awkwardness when they met: nor did Adela's reception of her returning kindness serve to diminish it.

At length Miss Auber alluded to the appointment in the Strand, and ventured to ask if she would attend to it, provided arrangements were made for the purpose. But our heroine replied that having gathered from her manner that it was not practicable, she had engaged herself to go a shopping with Emilia, and almost immediately after Caroline had the mortification to see them drive away, brilliant and beautiful as the morning that invited them abroad.

We never are truly sensible of the value of any thing till we have lost it; it is then we weigh its merits and learn from the pain of privation, to estimate the advantages of possession. Thus felt Caroline as she stood at the window and watched the carriage till it turned an angle of the square. The tenderness, the gentleness, the openness of Adela's nature, all appeared to her in their full truth and lustre, and a fear that Emilia's kindred disposition and habits would lead to an intimacy that might for ever supplant her in the esteem of Miss Belmont, painfully stole into her heart. Their growing attachment was evident, and if it should be so, if Adela withdrew her friendship, Caroline felt she had only herself to reproach for it—she had wronged and slighted Miss Belmont when she most merited her gratitude and acknowledgments. In the midst of these reflections, Frederic joined her: delighted at finding his sister

alone, he instantly entered on the subject nearest his heart; made her a confident of his passion, and intreated her interest in his behalf; and after relating the scene in the garden, gave her the letter and bracelet which Miss Belmont had left behind her, to return to the fair object of his ill-fated love. As circumstance after circumstance arose to dispel the mist that had gathered before the eyes of Caroline, she felt each moment more ashamed than the former of the manner in which she had acted, and more anxious to make reparation. All her distrust was changed to admiration and esteem, and her contrition was sincere. Not doubting but Adela's conduct to her brother arose from the timid delicacy of her nature, and perhaps fears of the Captain, with whose prejudices she knew her to be well acquainted, she thought she could not better repair her breach of friendship, and repay her debt of gratitude than by facilitating the union of two such beings as Adela and Frederic. Full of these thoughts she flattered her brother's hopes, and assured him of her assistance, till the

"Young blood ran frolic through his veins"

with joyous transport; and he vaulted into his saddle, when he mounted his horse for his morning ride, the happiest of created beings.

Bond Street was full of life and fashion as the sweet Emilia and her beautiful friend entered it. Carriages and rich liveries passing and repassing, full of the gay and wealthy; while multitudes of well dressed pedestrians thronged the pavement; the whole forming a moving panarama which amused by its numbers and

variety even the accustomed eye of Miss Auber. The mutual smile and bow which were so frequently exchanged between her and the inmates of many of the passing carriages astonished Adela, as it spoke the immense circle of her acquaintance; while the sweetness with which she mentioned many, and the anecdotes favourable to their character that she related, disclosed a spirit remote from that common taint of human nature—the love of scandal. Of those of whom she could not speak in praise, she was ever silent; and when the sarcastic irony of Caroline's remarks on character would sometimes induce a laugh, the sweet light in her eyes, was merriment at the wit, not pleasure at the satire; and she not unfrequently turned the shaft aside by some playful thought, or if in a more serious mode, brought an antidote to the poison by the mention of some trait or action in favour of the person traduced.

The carriage at length stopped, and they alighted at a large mercer's, where no short time was spent in examining a variety of the costliest articles, and in purchasing not a few. On their return to the carriage, accident detained them a moment at the door, when Lord Egremont passing arm in arm with another gentleman, suddenly stopped and addressed them. Having made his inquiries, he said gayly, "Let me present you a north-country cousin of mine, Mr. Malcolm Noel, Miss Auber—Miss Belmont," he continued presenting them to each other. Malcolm bowed, and observed that he had already the honour of knowing the latter.

Our heroine had not immediately recognised the

young Scot on many accounts—first of all he was the farthest from her thoughts of any person in the world; secondly, she did not expect to see him in such company; thirdly, he was much paler and thinner than when she had last seen him; and fourthly and lastly, his appearance was improved to a miracle by a very fashionable dress, and the very easy air with which it was worn.

Finding they attracted observation, though they had stepped back a little way into the shop, the ladies were eager to enter the carriage: but Lord Egremont lingered at the door of it after they were seated.

"O! I am desolated," he exclaimed, "the moment you drive away. Noel will never be able to support my drooping frame, my tottering steps."

"Had not your lordship better purchase a cane, then?" said Emilia, smiling.

"Useless, useless," cried he shaking his head. "If any one now would offer me a corner in their carriage it would be such a charity!"

"Do you spell as well as this out of book, my lord?" playfully exclaimed Miss Auber, and then making signs to the servant to open the door, his de lighted lordship leaped in, and was wholly forgetting Malcolm, when Miss Auber politely included him in the invitation, and he took his seat next to his noble cousin.

Once more they rolled on through the busy streets of traffic and extravagance: every passing object affording some pleasure or surprise to the young man: while one object alone ingrossed the attention of the old, (or to speak with more attention to the delicacy

of fashionable nerves) the "*ci devant jeune homme.*" Lord Egremont's eyes never wandered from Adela unless when she addressed Malcolm, and he then read his young relative's countenance with the keenest scrutiny: he immediately perceived the ill-disguised confusion which the mention of Mrs. Belmont occasioned, and it alarmed his fears; but his subsequent composure on every other subject that Adela broached, allayed them again, and Malcolm's blush and the name that called it forth were alike forgotten a few moments after.

"Can we set your lordship down any where between this and St. James's Street?" inquired Emilia, "for that is our destination."

"Was a man ever known to limit the term of his own happiness?" replied his lordship. "Would to heaven you were going to visit our antipodes.—Why here we are in St. James's Street already!" he exclaimed soon after. "Miss Auber, you have stolen your horses from the chariot of the sun."

Well, I trust at least," she replied, "that my coachman is not a *Phaeton.*"

"The same thing that destroyed the one will preserve the other—ignorance," observed Malcolm. "This worthy son of the whip, like many that hold the reins of government, is unconscious of what is under his conduct, and that which endangers all the world beside, leaves him harmless."

"Well said, Noel!" exclaimed his lordship. "Poor coachey's case is something of a paradox, he is both above and below the fatal influence to which we are mercilessly exposed."

The ladies alighted at Mrs. Selby's, and the gentlemen bade them farewell.

"I have come to hear you report progress, Mrs. Selby," cried Miss Auber with the sweetest affability. "I hope you have been very busy on my account.

"Indeed, madam we have," she replied; and touching the bell, she gave orders that had the effect of producing a variety of dresses in various states of forwardness; some almost finished, others only half so; while, with a tongue of unwearied volubility, she proceeded to comment on every thing she produced.

"I trust, madam, you will admire this pink satin pelisse, this *plûche en soie* that trims it, it is the most beautiful I ever beheld; and it is a colour so suited to the delicacy of your complexion. This *Barege* silk, is it not exquisite? O! but I have forgotten"—and she again applied herself to the bell. "Miss Powis bring me the *Parma violet gros de Naples* pelisse that Miss Sutton is upon," and then turning again to the ladies with a loquacity that nothing seemed capable of tiring or interrupting, continued—"It is trimmed on each side of the bust, and down the skirt, till the ornament terminates at the border of the skirt with united *lotos* leaves, and at the base of each triple leaf is a beautifully wrought button. But here it is madam," taking it from the young person, "description can do it no justice. Pray observe the form of these *maucherons*, how perfectly and elegantly they correspond with the trimming. This collar is of the *pagoda* form, and these Chinese bell tassals are quite unique."

"Why, Mrs. Selby," cried Miss Auber, "I ought to go to Brighton in this pelisse, it would be quite in

keeping with the Royal Pavilion there. This head-dress is very beautiful; is it not, dear Adela?" she added, turning to Miss Belmont.

"That, ladies," said the unwearied Mrs. Selby, "is the *Seraskier* turban, those *aigrette* feathers in the centre are most graceful: and that is the *Arabian* turban, the white crape of which is most classically rolled."

The door again opened, and to all appearance a white dress walked in by itself, for being hung upon a stand, the *petite fille* who carried it before her, could not be seen.

"O! that is finished, is it? I hope madam you will deem this a *chef-d'œuvre*," as taking it off the stand she brought it to Miss Auner. "Observe the peculiar whiteness of this gossamer satin: this dress is I assure you the entire work of a young Parisian lady of the highest taste, and not many days in town. What lightness and taste in these sleeves of *crêpe lissé!* Will you try it on, madam?"

"O! my dear Mrs. Selby, I should be here all day if I was only to look at half you have to show me, much more try on. There is one thing I have not seen yet, and it is what I chiefly came about—the Amaranth dresses;" and again turning to Miss Belmont she said, "I have been making preparations for the installation of our knights of the Amaranth, and I must have the aid of your taste and invention, my dear Adela. I shall not follow her Swedish Majesty strictly, but make such innovations as I think will contribute to the beauty and splendour of the scene, Are these they, Mrs. Selby? Very beautiful indeed!"

"It is the most brilliant candle-light colour in the world, madam," cried the Priestess of Fashion. "The bust of these dresses you see is the *Gallo-Greek* style."

"Which is Miss Belmont's?"

"This, madam."

"And her turban?"

"It is scarcely begun, I fear, but it will be most splendid and elegant. It is to consist of *Pactolus* or golden sand-guaze, ornamented with full-blown amaranths and a superb plumage of white feathers. It will altogether be a dress madam, that will equal the splendour of the oriental style."

"I am very much pleased that you have understood my orders so well, my good Mrs. Selby. And whatever cannot be finished before I leave town, must be sent down afterwards. We shall now wish you good-morning."

"I have been more amused with Mrs. Selby's hard names for every thing," said Adela as they drove away, "than with any thing else. Her's is a language in itself, and I think would afford a very tolerable sized dictionary."

"With which no lady ought to be unprovided, if she wishes to understand her dress-maker," said Emilia. "But really some of the names are very classical. The *Pactolus* gauze for instance. I dare say you remember the circumstance to which it alludes."

"I must confess my ignorance," replied Miss Belmont.

"Your forgetfulness rather," said Emilia. "*Pac-*

*tolus* was the river in which *Midas* bathed when he turned into gold whatever he touched, and ever after it rolled golden sands."

"I should have remembered," cried Adela, "the stream that watered *Sardis*. But my dear Miss Auber, what have you in contemplation? And for what have you ordered so magnificent a dress for me?"

"Why you are to be grand-mistress, and create the knights of your own order I hope. Come, I will have no modest declarations, you must indulge my whim. I have only one place more to stop at, and that is at Corbett's, my jeweller, to see if the badges of the order are in a state of forwardness; after which we will hasten home, and spend the rest of the day till dinner, in drawing up the laws of the order, and settling the ceremonial of the reception."

At Corbett's, Lord Egremont, seemingly by accident, but really by design, again met them, for on leaving them at Selby's he had only stepped into St. James's Hotel; so that he easily commanded their movements; and on quitting the jeweller's he and Malcolm resumed their seats in the carriage, and accompanied the ladies to Russel Square.

Seeton was at one of the drawing-room windows when the coach stopped, and would hardly credit the evidence of his senses when he saw Malcolm Noel alight: he knew him by a species of intuition before he was half out of the carriage, yet he was willing to doubt "till the force of doubting could no farther go;" and when the unwelcome visitor followed the ladies into the room he received him with cold and stately politeness. Love is the most ingenious of all tormentors:

when he observed that Mr. Noel spoke very little to Miss Belmont, and in a manner neither more bold or more timid than he addressed any other person; when he saw that she was even still more careless and regardless of him; so far from suffering those circumstauces to carry conviction, and remove the prepossession that filled his mind, by a singular perversion of the evidence before his eyes, he thought he saw, in the very circumstance of seeing nothing, that all was as he feared—

> "I find she loves him much because she hides it
> Love teaches cunning even to innocence;
> And where he gets possession, his first work
> Is to dig deep within a heart, and there
> Lie hid, and like a miser in the dark
> To feast alone."

Racked by his feelings, and unable to keep up the ball of conversation, as soon as the ladies withdrew he left Sir Hubert to entertain the gentlemen, and retired also.

"What are you about, in the name of mischief?" exclaimed Caroline as she entered Emilia's room, and beheld her and Adela seated at a writing table. "Are you reperusing your marriage settlement? You look as busy as a brace of lawyers in search of a flaw. May I be admitted to the conference?"

"*Si vous voulez*," said the smiling Emilia, and Caroline immediately seated herself at the table.

"What is this?" she cried taking up a paper, "ORDER OF THE AMARANTH—form of the order—ceremony of the reception and investiture—statutes

of the order. Well truly this is something like business."

"Is it not?" cried the delighted Emilia. "There is the grand-mistress Amarantha. We are Lady-Grand-Crosses of course; but I cannot arrange every thing till I have consulted with two or three, such as Sophia, Lady Ruthven, &c., to know whether they will like to join us or remain among the spectators: and besides I am anxious for the arrival of my sister Julia and the dear little Adele D'Audigne!"

"Let me write the duties and obligations by which the Knight-Postulant is to bind himself, and the address," cried Caroline, "and we will settle about particular ceremonials afterwards."

This proposition was agreed to, and after some general conversation the ladies separated to dress.

Caroline drew Adela into her own room the moment they left Emilia, and closing the door she cried—

"Have you thought of my poor Clarence since, and of his disappointment?"

"Not so much as I ought to have done," she replied, "for my present life is inimical to all calm thinking or (I might add) to all proper feeling. In the gaieties that have surrounded me I have, I blush to say it, forgot his sorrows and the deep sympathy they awakened."

"O! Adela, you know not how I am harassed. Chudleigh is importunate: my father is severe and suspicious; Clarence is friendless and resourceless!"

All the softness of Adela's nature was awakened in the effort to soothe her, and they returned to all their

original amity of feeling and kind intercommunion of sentiments. Caroline restored the letter and bracelet, and would have entered on the subject of Frederic; but Miss Belmont would not stay to hear another word: and for several days the succession of company at home and assemblies abroad, prevented any serious conversation, but still the friendliest feeling existed between them, which the frequent interchange of smiles, and short snatches of confidential talk, sufficiently evinced.

## CHAPTER XVI.

"She was a phantom of delight
When first she gleam'd upon my sight,
A lovely apparition sent
To be a moment's ornament.
Her eyes as stars of twilight fair
Like twilight to her dusky hair;
But all things else about her drawn
From May-time and the cheerful dawn,
A dancing shape, an image gay,
To haunt, to startle, and way lay.
I saw her upon nearer view
A spirit and a woman too."

At length the morning that was to unite the happy and enamoured Lord Milsom to the beautiful

Emilia Auber arrived, and all was note of preparation at Sir Hubert's at an earlier hour than usual. Servants full of business and importance jostled each other on the stairs—orders were given and countermanded, and given again—messages and parcels kept arriving and leaving the house the whole morning; while the ladies' maids had scarcely breathing time, any more than their respective mistresses. Sir Hubert's good humoured face, which attested by its rubified appearance that he was no enemy to a good wine cellar, looked rosier than ever, while the smile in his eyes was as sly as it was joyous: his gallantry seemed to have received a new impetus, for the ladies found him very troublesome, but they were all too ready to sympathize in his gaiety to check it: he kissed and capered about with every one of them that came within his reach, and Lady Auber declared that he had not been half so lively on his own wedding day thirty years before.

Caroline and Frederic were the very spirits to support the old baronet; they rattled sense and nonsense in an unwearied flow of humour and hilarity, and increased the joyous intoxication of his soul. The Earl of Errol also, though an older man than Sir Hubert, and of habits and manners more delicate and reserved, evinced the perennity of his spirits, and the fondness of his parental feelings in a gaiety the most exuberant. Faded scenes of "joys long fled" came back in all their pristine hues and lustre on the hearts of both these old gentlemen; and renewed a light in their eyes, and a glow on their cheeks, which restored many of the graces that time had withered One tale

of waggery and whim only served to suggest another, while humour, like a skilful caricaturist, by an occasional exaggeration heightened the effect, till the drawing-room rung with every degree of laughter, from the loud unrestrained "holding both his sides" laugh of Sir Hubert, to the modulated yet ringing laugh of Caroline. The very servants, as they passed in and out, or crossed each other, or met the different members of the family in the hall, galleries, or apartments, seemed raised to a temporary equality by the general intercommunion of a soul-stirring mirth: every eye was full of glee, every mouth wore a smile, and dimples "were as plenty as blackberries." It was the home of *Euphrosyne.*

> "Jest and youthful jollity,
> Quips and cranks and wanton wiles,
> Nods and becks and wreathed smiles,"

was the order of the day. Every one seemed to forget self, and all connected with self, and to catch the general and genial enthusiasm of happiness. At one end of the room Seeton might be seen hanging in a silent convulsion of laughter on the arm of his brother, who with colour mantling, eyes kindling, and the whole of his energetic figure the personation of joy, kept whispering the thought that continued and provoked the laugh till it grew into an audible ha! ha! Further on Sir Hubert, with his arm round his daughter, whose smiling and blushing cheek rested on his bosom, might be seen forming a cheerful group with Lady Auber and her future son; while on a sofa immediately opposite sat the happy Earl with Adela and

Caroline, all gaiety and animation on either side of him, and Captain Auber lounging on an ottoman near them.

The most perfectly happy of the family party were the most silent, and those were the two lovers. Excess of joy and sorrow is alike noiseless. The heart absorbed in its own emotions luxuriates in a delicious languor, and even if it wishes to give feeling utterance, it abandons the attempt from the inefficacy of language to paint emotion.

Emilia and Lord Milsom said little, theirs was the "eloquence of the eye," and O! what magic is there in that universal language, which without word or sound can create intercommunity of thought and feeling between beings of climates the most distant, and habits the most opposed. In this, when real passion is the prompter, when nature is left to her own workings, the rude and the refined, the illiterate and the learned, the native of every latitude is on a par. Love and hatred, mercy and malignity, pity and revenge are alike in all, though mental power or physical beauty may vary the shades of expression; they may differ in the mould but agree in the metal. The eloquence of silence is a subject that might employ the pen of a poet, nor need he fear the speedy exhaustion of his subject. *First, there is the eloquence of childhood, its rosy joys and April sorrows. How often has this silent eloquence "stood them in stead," and stayed the uplifted arm of murder; whispered compunction to the rudest hearts, and bloodiest hands—hands that have played the parricide, have paused and spared the babes, "whose not speaking spoke for them."

Then is there the eloquence of youth, its dawning hopes, its ardent expectations, its timid love, its vivid fears, all written on the open brow and glowing in the clear bright eye.

There is the eloquence of manhood; the strengthened passions speaking in the rougher cheek, the sterner eye, the consciousness of power, and the force of will.

There is the eloquence of decline, when youth has become a dream, and the darings of manhood have sunk under disappointment, and the rebuffs of his competitors in the walks of interest and ambition—the checked sigh, the transient smile, the fruitlessness of regret, and the fallacy of hope.

There is the eloquence of age; the calm fixed sense of what bubbles on the stream we are—the cold indifference to the conflicting interests, the agitating hopes and fears of others—the furrows of experience of dear and bitter purchase, and the anchorage of a hope beyond the grave. These are the broad unstudied outlines of a picture that might be filled up with a thousand shades of interest and of beauty.

Lord Egremont and his family came to an early dinner, and about seven of the carriages of other invited guests began to arrive. One only disappointment clouded the day; the non-arrival of the Marquis and Marquise de Pomenars, who had been expected to the latest moment.

The chaplain of the Earl of Errol was to unite the youthful pair by special licence, and the marriage was comparatively private, the company present not con-

sisting of more than half a dozen families with whom the allied houses were most intimate.

A temporary altar had been erected in the chief drawing-room, in which were assembled the company; when Emilia Auber, dressed in an elegant white lace dress over white satin, entered, supported by Captain Auber in full uniform, and followed by Adela, Caroline, Miss Egremont, and Miss Melville, all dressed in white as her bride's maids: at the same time at an opposite door entered Lord Milsom, attended by Secton, Frederic, (who was in uniform,) Mr. Chudleigh, and a Sir Edward Aston. Lady Auber occupied a chair at the side of the altar: Sir Hubert took his place near his daughter in order to give her away, and the rest of the party having arranged themselves, the chaplain began the solemnization of the nuptial rites. The ceremony, performed by one who was conspicuous for a dignified gravity of demeanour, and a distinct and impressive enunciation, affected the assembly, and especially those more immediately concerned: Lady Auber wept profusely, and some slow silent tears flowed from the soft eyes of Emilia and her gentle bride's maid, Adela.

When the ceremony was concluded, Lady Milsom threw herself into her father's arms, who after embracing her with the tenderest affection, led her to Lady Auber, who melted into a fresh gush of fond emotion as she pressed her beautiful child to her maternal bosom. The Earl then took her in his arms and kissed and blessed her.

The lovely bride kissed her bride's maids, and dis-

tinguished our heroine with the most marked affection; and having received the compliments and congratulations of the company, retired leaning on the arm of her lord.

In a quarter of an hour a message was brought to Adela that Lady Milsom wished to see her. Our heroine attended the summons, and found her already equipped in her white satin pelisse, and ready to depart the paternal mansion.

"My dear Adela," cried she, advancing with the lightest step, and sweetest smile, "I shall be in Derbyshire in the course of a week. Let me hope that you will be there as soon after that as possible: in the meantime will you call at Corbett's and Selby's, and see that my orders are faithfully executed. Farewell then, my sweet Miss Belmont, till we meet at Matlock."

Lord Milsom entering at that moment for his bride, repeated the invitation to Adela in the most flattering manner. Then taking Lady Milsom's hand, who had again embraced her tearful friend, he conducted her to their travelling carriage, sprung in after her, and the door being closed they flew off as fast as four splendid horses could carry them.

Emilia seemed to have carried all the spirits of her family with her, for a sweet pensive tone of feeling took possession of them, and of such of the company as could feel, which contrasted strongly with the vivid merriment of the morning. The Earl of Errol's departure followed soon after that of the bride and bridegroom—the rest of the party did not stay late, and as the household had been astir at an earlier hour

in the morning than ordinary, so it sunk into a repose sooner than usual that night. Every one retired with a feeling that they had lost something, and of a species of regret blended with even the most pleasurable emotions and anticipations. Never was there a being more universally beloved than the lovely Lady Milsom; unpretending and good-natured in the extreme, she seemed to live for others without a thought for herself; but under an exterior of the sweetest gentleness lay the principles of a firm fortitude, and a high sense of duty. As a daughter her conduct had been irreproachable; she blended the devoutest reverence, the most perfect obedience, with all the blandishments of filial confidence and affection: to every other relative she was kindly attached, to her friends and acquaintances equally complacent and obliging, to her servants gentle, and to the humblest being that ever crossed her path conciliating and affable. But it had been remarked of her that she had never had a confidential female friend, that very common desideratum to the generality of young women, between whom there usually is a budget of secrets often subsequently fatal to their peace and to their characters. Lord Milsom therefore had the singular good fortune to be not only her first and only lover; but her first and only friend: and his character in that, as in many other points, was so closely assimilated to Emilia's, that they might have said—

"We'll unlock
Our safest secrets, shed upon each other
Our tenderest cares, and quite unbar those doors
Which shall be shut to all mankind besides."

Caroline and Adela returned to all their former habits of uninterrupted intimacy. The morning after the bridal they left Russel Square together to make morning calls and arrangements previous to their leaving town; which was to be in nine or ten days at furthest.

They had not proceeded far when Caroline suggested our heroine's renewal of the visits to Clarence; that two more sittings would in all probability finish the miniature, and at least another ten pounds might be administered to the relief of Clarence's distresses. Adela readily acceded to the proposal; and having a coach called at the first shop at which they stopped, and appointing Mrs. Selby's as their rendezvous; she drove to the Strand. The former who had a carriage of her uncle's was soon after at Corbett's in Piccadilly, inquiring about the badges and other jewellery for Lady Milsom, when Seeton, passing on horseback and seeing the carriage at the door, stopped to speak to the servant. He had seen his sister and Miss Belmont leave Sir Hubert's, and he had yearned to be their companion; but he had only to reflect a moment to forbear making the attempt. Miss Egremont was in all probability at that moment expecting him; she might forgive his negligence in not attending her, but she certainly would not, his devoting those hours to another which she had a right to command. He conceived also that it was tolerably certain he should meet Mr. Noel, who was doubtless sufficiently well informed of the movements of his mistress, and would in all probability meet and attend her as he had done

the day before. Besides, he felt it was as unwise as it was improper to feed the passion he had unhappily conceived by seeking the society of its object, whose beauty and whose intelligence only served to increase his distaste for his destined bride. He therefore mounted his horse, and was taking his solitary ride, when the chariot caught his eye and tempted him to stop. While he was yet speaking to the footman, Caroline appeared at the shop-door. Mr. Auber, pointing to his sister, desired him to attend her; the steps were instantly let down, and the moment Miss Auber was seated, put up, and the door closed. Her brother looked his surprise, and after a momentary hesitation, asked what had become of Miss Belmont. Caroline, who was one of those who hold that "a white lie" is no harm, would have found an immediate excuse, but she recollected that she was speaking in the presence of the servants, who were aware of the circumstance of Miss Belmont's leaving her. She therefore pretended not to hear the question, and made some remark on the elegant animal, a fine blood mare that her brother rode, and which kept curvetting all the time the lady inside the carriage and the gentleman outside of it were at cross purposes.

"Is not Miss Belmont with you?" asked Mr. Auber.

Judiciously deaf to this inquiry, Caroline replied, alluding to the mare—

"She is a fine creature. What is she worth?"

Catching only the latter part of the question, he answered—

"Who can estimate that which is inestimable?"

"Indeed!" said his sister, "I did not think you rated her so highly!"

Her brother sighed, "I believe I am not singular in that."

"Then you must be an object of envy," said she.

"I cannot imagine why," he rejoined.

"If," she continued, "to possess that which is inestimable is to be a fit object of envy, you are one."

Believing, as he did, that Caroline was Miss Belmont's confident, without thinking of the improbability of such a communication, and especially in such a manner, an idea shot across his mind, that set his heart a palpitating, and mantled the blood into his face.

"What do you mean? Of what am I the possessor?" cried he anxiously.

"Of her," said Caroline pointing to the animal; but the gesture quick and slight escaped her brother; and with increasing agitation, he repeated—

"Her!" and he drew still closer to the carriage window, as he added in a low and deeply agitated voice. "Good Heavens! are you serious? Are you certain?"

Caroline read what was passing in his soul; it was the first conviction she received that his feelings towards Adela were of a really serious nature; and hurt beyond measure, she hastened to unriddle the mistake her little artifice of concealment had occasioned, saying—

"Why, are you not the master of Phillis?"

"Phillis! Who? What?" he exclaimed—

"Why, Phillis your mare?" she replied.

"And have you," he cried, while his cheek changed from red to white and from white to red with the quickness of thought, "have you been all this time talking of Phillis?"

"Yes to be sure," replied his sister.

He said not a word more, but furiously drawing up the rein, he put spur into the mare, and was out of sight in a moment.

Caroline did not immediately recover her disconcertion. She was now the repository of the secret passion of both her brothers for the same object, and she dreaded the results it was likely to lead to with both; and in calculating probable events, she contrasted the characters of the young men.

Frederic, violent and impetuous, she was conscious would not leave things long in *statu quo*, but by some rash and desperate proceeding either mar or make his fortune. If Adela favoured his passion she foresaw an elopement, and already pictured to herself all the confusion that would be the consequence: if on the contrary she rejected him, his disappointment might lead to a conclusion the most fatal, if he was not watched till the effervescence of his passion had time to subside; after that, Caroline knew him sufficiently well to feel certain that his mind would quickly recover its equilibrium, and some other and kinder heart might heal the wound his own had sustained.

Far differently stood the case with Seeton. His feelings lay more deep than Frederic's, they were not moved so quickly, nor so often; but in proportion as they were slow and seldom, were they profound and

permanent. His much greater cultivation, his pursuits and his studies had heightened and enriched the deep vein of romantic feeling that ran in silent and unobtrusive force through his mind. From their cradle the two brothers had exhibited a distinct and different character; the younger turbulent, volatile, and unsettled, the demolisher of the glittering toys he had most coveted, and the capricious, although not ill-natured tyrant, of the playmates without whom he was never happy. The elder gentle, firm, and equal, was a quiet child, who excited little notice, excepting for the beauty of his person, and the sweetness of his temper. Frederic was all the glitter and *eclat*; and when they departed for Oxford, whither Seeton preceded his brother a few years, equally different were the expectations and the results that attended each. The intuitive quickness of the one was expected to snatch precocious honours; while the peaceful course of the other was looked forward to, as likely to produce nothing beyond the ordinary progress of ordinary youths.

College is the grand theatre of action, the portal of youthful life, where genius first expands, and the character begins to unfold itself; the multitude of associates, who present every shade of variety the human species can display, admits of the choice of friends of corresponding tastes and habits. And the selection of the two brothers sufficiently attested their dissimilarity of nature. The younger was soon surrounded by the gayest and most dissipated, who imposing no restraints on inclination, followed the dictates of wild whim, and licentious imagination: he became the

ringleader in all riots, and was "stirring with the lark" whenever mischief was afloat; the collegian's habit never adorned one who so little merited the appellative of student, unless a studious devotion to the busy idleness of daily follies and nightly freaks could entitle him to the designation. His career was short as it was ruinous; and e'er he had completed his eighteenth year he was expelled the university for a wanton infringement of its rules, as bare of honours or information as a "frog is of feathers." His friends, disconcerted and disappointed, were at a loss what to do for him, when circumstances and his own choice concurred in procuring him an ensigncy in the Guards.

In Seeton, on the contrary, it was soon discovered *Alma Mater* had adopted a true son. His devotion to his studies was marked by a brilliant and rapid progress, and in the beautiful scenery of Oxford and its vicinity he nursed his poetical ardour and classical taste. He had not been insensible to the intoxications of pleasure, the syren drew him but too frequently astray; but they were nothing more than the venial and temporary aberrations of youthful passion which interrupted but did not divert the ultimate aim of his ambition. He left the university with the reputation of possessing considerable learning, and much brilliancy of talent; his manners neither rusticated by an exclusive devotion to books, nor his mind debased by a course of gross debaucheries; his youth blended its brilliant tints with the dignity which belongs to a maturer period of life: and the singular beauty of his person borrowed more than half its power from the unaffected and easy grace which sprung from a su-

periority to all the littleness and vanities of common life. His engagement with Miss Egremont fixed him in the circles of fashion, and afforded him few opportu nities for the studious and literary retirement that he loved. He was carried down the full tide of the *beau monde* as on a stream which will carry that forward which happens to lay accidentally on its surface; he met few that he admired, and many that he merely endured, and neither took the trouble to penetrate their feelings or to discover his own; he therefore had some of that reserve about him which is the usual consequence of not meeting minds of a congenial stamp. The real tone of his character was little known even to his own family, who, though dear to his affections, were very ill suited to be the associates of his pursuits, or the participators of his thoughts and feelings; so little did their tastes assimilate. In Adela he had found this consonance, united to the most faultless beauty, and the most perfect purity. That principle of attraction which is founded in congeniality of sentiment and feeling, was quickly felt; and Mrs. Belmont, who had a peculiar talent for drawing forth those with whom she conversed, mutually displayed them to each other in all the glowing and resplendent lights of their respective talents, in all the sweet and harmonious breathings of their respective characters. So that in the short time they passed together in Wales, they became more intimately acquainted with each others opinions and ideas, than they could have done in ten times that period under other circumstances. Seeton's passion, therefore, bright

as its object, and deep as his feelings, did not promise to pass,

> "And like the baseless fabric of a vision
> Leaves not a rack behind."

Its calm progress was like the slow, but certain approach of the wild tempest;

> "And first heard solemn in the verge of Heaven;"

but that it would come nearer, and "roll its awful burden" on the astounded Egremonts, the distracted Captain, and the wondering world, Caroline felt certain. What would be the issue she was at once afraid and unable to conceive. The immediate marriage of her brother and Miss Egremont might avert some of the mischief and disgrace: Mrs. Saugrober, aware of the danger, might give up her objection and facilitate the union; but Caroline had not the courage to interfere; it was playing with edged-tools; it was drawing down the bolt, that hovered in mid air, and some circumstances of which she was not aware might be lying in embryo to bear it hurtless over their heads. She therefore came to the ultimate resolution of standing neuter, unless indeed she found Miss Belmont favourable to the suit of Frederic, when she thought she should "deserve well of her country" in aiding their cause. What was the state of our heroine's mind she was at a loss to guess, as indeed it is very hard to do with those sensitive girls who blush at every thing, almost as much so as with those insensates who blush at nothing; but she now resolved

to ascertain, either directly or indirectly, the position of the enemy.

At Mrs. Selby's Caroline found Miss Egremont, and two or three young ladies of her acquaintance in high divan, trimming character with the same or even more facility than the ladies of the establishment trimmed dresses. The entrance of Miss Auber did not long divert them from their debate, for, though she had neither their littleness nor malignity, she had no objection to attend *lectures on anatomy*, as she termed scandal parties; and frequently held the syllabus herself with peculiar grace and effect. But she was above "breaking a butterfly on the wheel," or dealing indiscriminate destruction on youth, innocence, and beauty. The game that Caroline hunted down was the genteel vulgar, and the whole class of would-bes, of whatever sex or denomination.

As she entered she heard one of the *coterie* whisper to Miss Egremont, "Alone," and immediately another, who was sufficiently plain, and as flippant as she was ugly, inquired, "What have you done with your inseparable?"

"O! I suppose she stays at home, to amuse Mr. Auber out of the sulks," observed the piqued Sophia.

"Ah," said another, "may be she's singing, 'They're a noddin.'"

"No," said Caroline with great point, "no one ever nods in *her* company," and then turning exclusively to Miss Egremont added, "I thought my brother had been with you. I met him on horseback this morning, and from the direction he took when we

parted, I imagined Grosvenor Square was the goal of his morning ride."

"O! bless you!" cried his mistress, "I have seen nothing of him; but I don't want, that's one good thing."

Caroline lamented to see the pique Miss Egremont evinced, but she could neither blame it, nor be surprised at it. Willing to form some excuse for him, she replied—

"O! but I have some slight recollection of his receiving a letter yesterday from some society to which he belongs, probably it was to request his attendance this morning."

"Ah! perhaps some *Welsh* society," said one of the ladies significantly.

"Or perhaps the *Mendicity* society; if so I hope to have some tickets to give away," cried Caroline. This speech was perfectly understood by her to whom it was addressed, who was a hanger-on of Miss Egremont's, whose caprices she adopted, and whom she unblushingly flattered in the grossest manner. There were many stories afloat that redounded little to the advantage of this young lady and a long line of her illustrious ancestry, who were celebrated for a very economical knack of living at the expense of others, and she was a legitimate sprout of this family of the spunges. Though spurgalled by a malignant humour that yearned to make a retort, she bit her lip, and saved the hoarded venom of her heart for some better opportunity: and the first gleam that cleared the midnight of her brow was, as she flew to the window

again, seeing our heroine alight from a hackney coach.

Miss Egremont turned her back on Adela the moment she entered, and Caroline seeing the disposition of the party, very soon after took Miss Belmont by the hand and retired, leaving the fair assemblage to renew the feast of scandal, and the flow of gall; which they did with an appetite quickened by new stimulants. So exhaustless was the subject, and so delightful to the spirit of Miss Egremont, that on her return home she renewed it in a conversation with Lady Ruthven, from whom it transpired to Lord Egremont in a happy confidential *tete-a-tete*. The story was not without its due effect on his lordship's curiosity, though he carefully concealed that it excited the slightest interest in his breast; secretly resolving to make it the subject of investigation, he artfully changed the topic with an indifference seemingly the most unaffected. The idea of some favoured rival presented itself immediately, and he determined to place his emissaries (creatures whom he had never been without) as spies upon the actions of our heroine, that he might have the earliest information of all her movements. It was evident that there was some person in town whom she visited in secret, and on this point he felt he should know little peace till he was satisfied.

The unconscious object of designs the most base, and rumours the most injurious, led by a spirit of pure and active benevolence, and an affectionate and sympathizing friendship, was the very next day seen

by Lord Egremont's scouts leaving Mrs. Laggon's; immediate information was brought to his lordship, who accordingly in an hour, or somewhat later, introduced himself to that lady, carefully concealing his rank as well as his views. Habited in a very ordinary dress, and being a very ordinary personage, he impressed Mrs. Laggon with no great ideas of his consequence, who bawled out as he was addressing her son at the street door—

"What does that *ould man* want, Robert Laggon?" What a disagreeable woman! thought his lordship, who had a nervous antipathy to any allusion to his age; but hiding his disgust under a very civil smile, he inquired if she had not a young man in her house.

"Och! bad luck to that fellow, how I'm bothered about him! You're the third ill-looking body that's been axing me questions about him this morning. But ye need give yoursilf no more trouble, nor me neither, for he's gone from this, and the divil go with him."

"I fancy," said his lordship, who had by this time insinuated himself into the parlour, "you are mistaking me, I mean the person who has been recently visited by a young lady."

"And what for should I mistake?" replied the irritated dame. "It is the same I spake of, the *minatur* painter to be sure, but it did'nt get him salt for his porridge, I'll engage. I was a fool to take such lumber into my house."

"Then he has really and entirely left here?" inquired his lordship with emphasis.

"Indade and he is to, and it did'nt take him long to do that nither; all he is worth wouldn't fill a pockit handkerchief, if he has such an article."

Lord Egremont had met with a variety in life, but "his deponent" out Heroded Herod in all he had seen or conceived of malice and vulgarity.

"Can you inform me whither he has removed to?"

"Noa!" she replied in a voice and manner that evinced a desire to end the parley.

"I am ashamed to give you so much trouble," cried his lordship in a most conciliating tone, "and I should be happy to make some acknowledgment for it and for the time I am taking up; but I have an interest in the young lady who has been in the habit of calling here, and should be grateful for any information you can give me."

Mrs. Laggon's countenance underwent an instantaneous change; expectation and curiosity kindled in her eyes as she replied—

"Indade, and it wasn't a very dacent thing for her to come as she did. But perhaps she is his sister; but I'll engage she is not though; but poor thing! perhaps she knowed no better. May be you're her father, sir; she's very handsome, and there's a grate likeness;" as she uttered the concluding part of this speech, she glanced a look of irony as quick as it was wicked at her son, who stood open mouthed by his lordship's side.

"No," he replied, "I am not her father. Pray do you know any thing of this young man? How long did he reside here?"

"Four or five months, somewhere about that; but

I seed little of him. He calls himself Clarence, and says he's a Frenchman, but he spakes English as well as I do."

"How often has this lady visited him?'

"Och! miny times; but only very lately."

"Was he in the habit of receiving letters before that time?"

"Och! many's the letter I have paid for, for him, I'll engage."

"Do you remember if they were in a female hand, and did you ever notice the post mark?"

"Och and to be sure it was a famale hand, and the post mark, sometimes I could make it out, and sometimes I could not, and I forgits it now for he has had no letters lately. Let me see, it was Aberway, I think."

"Ah! Aberconway," repeated her auditor in a confirming tone.

"It might be, it might be; and Robert there used to poke his fingers into the letters—"

"No, I did'nt," interrupted the boy in a low murmuring voice, and a discontented shrug of his high shoulders.

"Hould your tongue sir," cried his mother; "and when I went to close the letter, and put it to rights, because it looked so bad, and he might suspict something, I used to chance to see that it was writ in French or some foreign tongue."

"Did they converse in English when they met?"

"Och! no; for if I chanced to be on the stairs, or passing his door, I'll engage I never could understand a word they were spaking. And its all my own fault

too, my father was a responsible man, but I wouldn't attind to my idefication; why there's not a poor cratchur that runs about bare-legged and bare-footed in *my* country, but can discourse you in five or six different languages."

"Did they appear on terms of great intimacy?"

"Och sir, and what is it you're driving at? I have been a married woman, and this is a rispictable house I'd have you to know."

"You mistake me," cried he, hastily seeking to allay her rising fury, "I mean, did they appear on terms of friendship."

"Och! I'll engage and they did too; she used to smile, and she hasn't such a pair of eyes in her head without knowing it; and the first time she cried, ah! bitterly too; may be she had something to repent her of—little good comes of such doings, I'll engage."

The conversation was continued in this strain somewhat longer, and his lordship's information was trivally augmented, though his original suspicions were all confirmed. That Miss Belmont had a favoured and a secret lover was evident on the face of things, but who this individual was he was not as yet destined to discover. On rising to take leave he put a crown into the boy's hand, and wishing Mrs. Laggon good morning, told her he would probably do himself the pleasure of calling on her again.

"And won't I be glad to see you, sir?" said she. "But may be, I may hear of something between this and then that you might wish to know: and sure it would be myself that would be plased to bring you the news. Where might I find you, sir?"

"If you should have any information to communicate, let it be in a letter addressed to the *senior* Mr. Bolton of Threadneedle Street, and depend upon it any trouble you take will be handsomely rewarded."

"Och! never name it, sir; never name it," she repeated, curtseying him to the door; where we shall leave him to pursue the object of his ill-designed inquiries—the unfortunate Clarence.

## CHAPTER XVII.

"Weep on—perhaps in after days,
They'll learn to love your name;
And many a deed may wake in praise,
That long has slept in blame."

Dean Swift very foolishly calls prudence an aldermanic virtue, he should rather have termed it a *cardinal* one. It is the want of that grand supervisor, that has so often rendered the possession of all the other virtues valueless and unavailing, since it is seldom the world gives a man credit for much worth who has fallen into much error. And when have the imprudent done otherwise? Their faults are almost involuntary: acting from impulse, they never pause to reflect till it is too late, and then conscious, what-

ever may be the consequences of their conduct, that it originated in no deliberate baseness, they find little difficulty in forgiving and palliating their errors to themselves. Having thus made their self-confessions, like a newly shriven sinner they throw off the remembrance of their misconduct, and the sage counsels of experience together, and sin against prudence and common sense with as much facility as ever. No such lenity actuates those who sit in judgment over them—society at large, looks only to results and consequences; the various circumstances of fortune and feeling, of temptation and temperament, that give a peculiar bearing to every case, is never taken into consideration. We might as well expect the wholesale dealer to weigh his bales and hogsheads with the apothecary's weights, and adjust his balance to a grain. Those that expect such a nicety of justice are mistaken; the world, as the dealers in it, of what class and denomination soever, have very little to do with *scruples.*

It matters not whether the insolvent has become so by the treachery of false friends, or the trickeries of false dice; it is enough that he has made a sudden acquaintance with the sheriff's officer; and a *bailiff* will keep friends *at bay* more successfully, than the baying of the watchdog does thieves. His name in the *gazette* is the only part of him they desire to *gaze at.* His *entrée* and his *exit* are contrasted, and a very unceremonious *vito* is recorded against him.

The imprudence of the other sex is visited with even still greater severity; and when once she steps

from the pedestal of reputation, she is lost irrevocably.

> "The traveller, if he chance to stray,
> May turn uncensured to his way:
> Polluted streams again are pure,
> And deepest wounds admit a cure!
> But woman no redemption knows,
> The wounds of honour never close."

Vainly she pleads the blandishments of her seducer; the proneness of her own heart to love and tenderness; the circumstances that threw her into his dangerous power, and that left her wholly at his mercy. Her imbecility and his baseness are items with which the world have nothing to do, and the broad brand of infamy stigmatizes alike the victim of one repented error, and the reckless perpetratress of a hundred.

Since then the want of prudence is often equivalent to the want of virtue, and visited as severely; it is somewhat surprising that it is so universally underrated: and while every other virtue is by turns affected, we so seldom find people pretending to this. Perhaps this inconsistency may be accounted for, from the circumstance, that this mild preservative of the economy of life is seldom found co-existent with genius. People will therefore affect improvidence and eccentricity, in the hope of gaining credit for the possession of their occasional concomitants—wit and talent. It may also arise from a consciousness, that as prudence is a negative rather than a positive virtue, it is as often the defence of the wicked as the guard of the worthy, and is perhaps more frequently found at the former

than the latter post. Prudence has been so constantly known to flourish where no other flower took root—to spring in rank luxuriance, and afford the shelter of its shade to parsimony, cowardice, selfishness, and all uncharitableness, that an indirect slur has been thrown on a quality known to be indigenous to the miser, and the mercenary, the crafty, and the cowardly. Imbecility always crouches for protection behind the shield of prudence; the weak and timid do not advance a step, without first putting forth their feelers, as the snail does its *antennæ*, to ascertain that there is no danger. The sordid and avaricious amass their money, and dispense their stinted boons, under this mask.

But prudence, rightly understood, is one of the most desirable and essential qualities of mind. It is the rudder of conduct, and wit sits vainly at the stern when that is wanting. To this deficiency might Clarence trace the series of misfortune that had marked his brief career. Headlong impatience, and uncontrolled passion were his Scylla and Charybdis: and he had that singular peculiarity, which belongs to the professedly imprudent, of being insensible to the warnings of experience. He seemed to get out o. one dilemma only to be in readiness to fall into another.

His earliest perceptions found him residing in seclusion in one of the southern provinces of France under the protection of a priest, to whom the care of his education seemed rather a pleasure than a duty; at an early age he was removed to one of those colleges, of which many exist in that kingdom, where he

received gratuitously all the advantages of a more extended plan of instruction; and thither his protector accompanied him. As he advanced in years, and his perceptions awakened him to the singularity of his isolated situation, he would frequently endeavour to elicit information as to his birth and future destiny. But with regard to the first object of his inquiry the holy father observed an impenetrable reserve, and on the subject of the latter he evinced an indecision, that plainly showed he was only an agent, and that some bidden mover was behind the curtain, on whom depended the conduct of Clarence's fortune. At length came the decree, and he was doomed to a monastic life; a denunciation from which his soul revolted. Life was to him "a bright illusion" sketched by a bold fancy, and tinted with the most vivid hues of an ardent imagination, and when he contrasted it with what he conceived the cold inanity, the sombre gloom of a monastery, it "breathed a browner horror" o'er his soul than death itself. The more he reflected the stronger became his antipathy to the life marked out for him, and the more determined his resolution to fly from it. "The world was all before him where to choose;" yet he was poor and friendless, and in the great wilderness before him he knew not what track to pursue; but—

> "The young blood ran frolic through his veins,
> And boyhood made him sanguine."

Under the auspices of a fine starlight night, he effected his escape from college; and with pockets nearly as light as his heels, he made his way to Paris. By

singular good fortune in the first *café* he entered in that metropolis he met a schoolfellow, who did not withdraw the hand of friendship and fellowship which he had extended on their first *rencontre*, after he was informed of the real situation of the late companion of his sports and studies. His father was a man of science; he took Clarence home, and in a very short time *le bon pere*, with the same spirit that actuated his son, took the truant by the hand, and made his talent available to the procurement of a decent subsistence. Thus far aided by the wind and tide of fortune, having made a port, when he expected only to meet the rocks and shoals of adversity, he for some time evinced that circumspection of conduct, which showed his gratitude to Heaven, and sense of what was due to those who had served him, and to himself. But temptation, which wooed him in a thousand forms, at length succeeded in drawing him from the strong hold of prudence; and the ungrateful apostate from her precepts, soon found himself involved in ills innumerable, the direst of which was —poverty.

"Thus bad begins, but worse remains behind."

Adversity has been called the school of virtue: it is that comparative adversity then, that quickens industry and prompts exertion; which, though wanting comforts, is not destitute of necessaries, and which can look forward to the future with some confidence. Extreme poverty, as subjecting man to great temptations or enfeebling his energies, is as inimical to

virtue as to exertion. The first is the bracing air of a cold morning, which animates the pedestrian to a quicker pace: the last is the intense inclemency of a winter's night, which benumbs the limbs and stagnates the blood, which produces torpor and insensibility. Independence is the best groundwork of virtue, the healthy soil in which the salutary seed, sown by the hand of industry, yields a productive harvest. He who earns a sufficiency to meet the common calls of nature, though unable to vie in appearance or share in the pleasures of thousands that surround him, has still that which will preserve his integrity from taint, and his feelings from insult. But the precarious state of that being who to-day has, and to-morrow has not, who feels the cravings of nature without the means to satisfy them, is one in which honour must yield to necessity, and the delicacy of feeling be disregarded. When want, misfortune, and we will say misconduct, first send forth their victim, the remains of his better nature recoils from that which every where presents itself; he returns into himself to shudder over degradation tamely submitted to, to recollect rudeness and churlishness calmly acquiesced in; but the nerve that has been long exposed will grow callous; his feelings will gradually lose their poignancy, till at last he will court debasement if it brings a recompense. Temptation to crime assails him. The alternative of punishment is little dreaded by one who can scarcely be made more wretched, and there is a chance that his delinquency may escape detection. It is thus, one by one, poverty throws down the barriers of integrity,

and the mind resigns every principle of honour—every precept of virtue: that it should be so the philanthropist will mourn, but must forbear to censure.

"Do men gather grapes of thorns, or figs of thistles?"

From the last degradations of unsparing poverty, Clarence saved himself by enlisting in a cavalry regiment, in which he soon distinguished himself by a bearing that evidently belonged to a superior rank, by the graces of his person, and the advantages which a good education never fails to afford its possessor. The French army admits of that gradation which will elevate the common soldier to the rank of field marshal: and many without a tithe of Clarence's advantages have experienced such an exaltation; but they undoubtedly possessed, what *he* did not—common sense—

"Which though no science, is fairly worth the seven,—"

or else a share of good fortune that did not fall to him. His elegant manners and companionable qualities, his gaiety and good humour, secured him the goodwill of both comrades and commanders. Again was the past given to oblivion, and the future to hope. Again did the free spirit that dwelt within him rally all its powers; but like the young savage, full of conscious strength and glowing life, uncalculating as to future contingencies, and unread in the science of the world, Clarence soon gave umbrage to pride, and opportunity to envy. Cunning, says Gold smith, is an overmatch for wisdom, operating like instinct in brutes: it moves in a narrow circle, but

within the compass of its influence it generally operates with success. Among those whom the commanding officer especially distinguished was Clarence and a young man of the name of Le Gant. Never were beings more opposite brought into the same sphere of action. The latter, schooled in the craft of the world, concealed under the civilest exterior a disposition, that owned no kindly feeling towards any of the human race. Like Fag in the Rivals, he recompensed himself for his abject submission to those above, by the grossest tyranny over those below him. His swarthy and diminutive person shrunk instinctively from the neighbourhood of so fine a form as Clarence's. All the little artillery of his venemous nature, was soon furbished up to be in readiness to attack the young aspirant, whenever a safe opportunity should offer; while all the ingratiating arts of which he was master, were put in exercise to forward his own views of promotion. The usual effects were soon apparent: the regardless and unthinking Clarence obtained nothing more than empty honours; while his secret foe, by dint of assiduity took the *pas*, and was soon seen strutting about,

"Pranked in authority, against all noble sufferance."

Clarence saw his rise without envy, but not without surprise; unable to penetrate the little artifices by which he wormed himself into favour, he took up the opinion so common to the improvident, that Le Gant was as predestined to good, as he to ill fortune. The timulant again weakened, and he made no determinate exertions: while his careless habits and un-

guarded expressions laid him open to misrepresentation. Le Gant in the meantime was as busy in working his downfall, as he had been in effecting his own rise. But he was carefully on his guard not to betray his designs ; like the assassin he stabbed him in the dark, and then was the first to come forward with pretended commiseration. He was the origin and instigator of opinions and prejudices injurious to the object of his envious hatred; but when referred to on the subject, he affected a perfect impartiality; or, was the current strong against him, he spoke in extenuation ; or, was there an evident movement in favour of the traduced, he

> "With hesitation—humbly slow,"

presumed and enforced the possibility; yet still with his accustomed caution at the close of every debate, he—

> "Knew what he knew, as if he knew it not,
> What he remembered seemed to have forgot,
> His sole opinion let whate'er befall
> Cent'ring at last in having none at all."

Thus to none, not even to Clarence himself, did he appear to entertain one feeling of enmity against him. But the exercise of his authority was soon sufficiently galling to him on whom it fell. Justly has it been said that ill-usage is as hard to relate as to endure. There is commonly something pitiful in complaint, and though oppression in a general sense provokes the wrath of mankind, the investigation of its minuter circumstances excites nothing but derision. Clarence daily endured "wrongs too trifling

to resent, but too humiliating to be borne," and in a moment of rashness, thought to free himself from the trammels of subjection by desertion.

It is not our purpose to follow him through the fugitive adventures of his flight till his meeting in the wood at Nice, Caroline Auber, and Emma Chudleigh. It is sufficient to say that his sufferings both physical and mental were great. Having once taken the ill-advised step, (and though pennyless and friendless he had nothing to fly to,) flight was imperative. Often was the grass his food, and the heavens his canopy; sometimes he obtained the shelter of a cottage, and shared the poor man's crust. Impelled by famine he would stop the infant in its way to school, and snatch from its little hand the unfinished morsel, but in his moments of wildest misery he did no further wrong, committed no greater violence, and not one of the little ones he despoiled suffered more than a momentary privation. What he took was the superabundance of plenty, placed in the baby-hand by maternal tenderness--a tenderness that would have yielded succour to him, could he have appealed to its charity; for the concurring testimony of every traveller agrees in proclaiming the female heart the true seat of compassion and benevolence, in every climate.

At Nice the pleasure of Miss Auber's society, and his growing passion, rendered him insensible to the dictates of caution. Forgetful of his recent deliverance from death, he also forgot that he was still in danger; and in a moment when he least expected it, he was made a captive by a party sent in pursuit of him, at the head of which was Le Gant.

In reconducting him to head quarters he was of necessity often lodged for the night in the prisons of the places through which they passed; and these prisons were frequently little adapted for security, but the vigilance of Le Gant precluded the possibility of escape. One night, after a weary march, and such fare as—

"Sparrow's would grow lank on,"

he threw himself on the floor of a damp dungeon, glad even of such repose as it could offer. *La belle Angluise*, and the probability that he might never behold her more, occupied all his thoughts, and panged his heart with an agony deeper than any apprehension of his impending fate. Suddenly the *tocsin* sounded, the militarily was called out, all was terror and confusion: through the bars of his grated window he saw the crimsoned skies reflect the red flames of a vast conflagration. He sprung upon his feet; it was the beacon of liberty to him: renovated hopes, wild visions of future joys, flashed upon his soul, roused all the energies of his harassed mind, and sinewed his relaxed and wearied limbs. He effected his escape. Once again he breathed the air of freedom. Once again fate held forth a promise of triumph over the "hungry ruin" that pursued him. He walked boldly forward, with a step light as though he had known no toil—so intimate is the sympathy between the soul and body. He had now a stimulant he had never known before, the most powerful perhaps the human mind acknowledges. Miss Auber had informed him of the possibility of her return to England, and had

furnished him with her address that he might write to her whenever they should be separated. Great Britain then was the haven of his hopes, the land of promise, and thither he determined to direct his course; but how was this to be effected? He that has triumphed over many difficulties, never wants hope for the future. With a firm reliance on the Providence that had so far sustained him, he went boldly forward, and took his way through a wood, his mind too much occupied to be sensible of physical suffering, when suddenly he met his mortal foe, Le Gant. He still thought sufficiently well of him to believe he would not take advantage of his defenceless state; but he soon found it otherwise. His mind was then made up. He was unarmed; but with the velocity of light, the strength of despair, he sprung like a lion on his foe. In the close grapple with his wild adversary, Le Gant found it useless to retain the sword that he had drawn, and the contest became a wrestle in which Clarence made himself master of one of Le Gant's pistols. They were now on equal grounds, if equal it may be called, when the motives of action were so different: both fired at the same moment. Le Gant fell, wounded, perhaps mortally, and Clarence having dragged him into the high road that he might have the chance of being met by some good Samaritan, fled unhurt.

Various and cruel were his difficulties and privations till his meeting with Mr. Wingregin, and being through his means made the companion of Miss Auber's voyage to England. But in the bliss of that meeting, in the hopes that sprung from it, he forgot

for a time the destitution and solitude of soul that awaited him. Arrived in London, he found himself surrounded by people all occupied in the pursuits of trade and commerce, with few of these social qualities that invite the stranger to confidence and companionship. Reflection, which he had hitherto so successfully shunned, now overtook him like a remorseless creditor, determined to discuss every item of his long neglected account. He looked round the world, and felt he was alone: neither parent, relative, or friend was his. From his country he was for ever an outcast and an alien, under the ban of her outraged laws, as a deserter, most probably as a murderer. One being in the world there was, and one only, to whom his heart could turn with confidence or comfort; and she was divided from him by circumstances that did not leave him even the consolation of breathing the deep and ardent passion of his soul. His spirits sunk under the weight that oppressed them, and he had not the courage or perseverance to make those efforts which would have rendered his talents availing; but the proffered succours of Caroline Auber aroused his pride, and stimulated some exertions to obtain independence. The moment those exertions repaid him, he took the romantic resolution of visiting Wales, in the hope of seeing the beautiful arbitress of his destiny. Of the fruitlessness of that journey we are already aware. He followed his mistress to London, where he found that his excursion had not only invaded his resources, but had also militated against his interest; and he was reduced to the lowest ebb, resourceless and desponding, when our heroine like a ministering

angel brought him timely succour. The days that intervened between her first and second visit, were days in which he experienced a renovation of spirit and of hope to which he had been long a stranger. He walked with more elasticity of step, he looked around him with more interest on the objects that met his view, and he wrote to Miss Auber in a tone of feeling that spoke the balm that had been poured into his wounded heart. Cessation of pain is positive pleasure. Ease and tranquillity, to those who have never known their opposites, are but negative enjoyments; to the harassed and unhappy, they are pleasures as vivid as they are sweet. Extreme poverty is probably the aggregate state of human wretchedness: and of the details that form that aggregate, the clamour of the vulgar and disappointed dun is the most horrific. Long habits of sorrow and distress will teach a patient acquiescence in privations the most painful, but no duration of time will steel the sensitive heart against the sense of degradation. To such the approaching step of the creditor to whom appeal is vain, is more dreadful than the levelled pistol of the footpad; the latter draws the trigger and in one momentary pang life, and its hopes and fears, its good and ill are past: but the former wastes his victim by the inch, and tortures a life it would be mercy to destroy. All that awakens interest in the refined and delicate, only quickens the malice of the vulgar and the gross; and as in the catalogue of the distressed gentleman's calamities there are none so frightful as the lowminded and suspicious creditor, who of all beasts of prey is the most remorseless and voracious,

so in the estimation of the unfeeling, the unkindly vulgar, there is on earth nothing so contemptible as the poor gentleman.

From this, the timely aid of Caroline had just rescued her unfortunate Clarence; and will it be wondered that such an exemption flushed his cheek almost with the glow of pleasure, and renewed the anticipation of brighter days? Deep indeed must be that melancholy, which under such circumstances would not yield to the insinuations of hope; since however often or however long deluded, it is the peculiar happiness of man, that he can still give his ear to the soothings of her harmonious whispers. Clarence devoted himself with new ardour to his profession, and put the finishing touches to the sketch of the ruin of Valle Crucis, which he had taken on the day that Malcolm Noel visited that romantic place in company with the Wingregins, his cousins three and thirty times removed. This was placed with the other specimens of his talent in Mrs. Laggon's window. It had not been long there before it attracted the attention of one well able to appreciate its beauty and fidelity; this one was no other than our young Caledonian, who was strolling down the Strand, in an idle search of amusement, which induced him to look at every thing. He stopped to examine the frame of miniatures, and was instantly struck with the picturesque view of the ruin. Associated as that place, and the pale and mysterious artist was in his mind, he determined to introduce himself to the painter; and stepping into the house, he soon found himself before the identical person who had so vividly

impressed his imagination, and with whom he so earnestly desired an acquaintance. His prepossession strengthened the moment he beheld Clarence, who, won from his reserve by the open countenance and easy address of Malcolm, gave way to the natural sociability of his nature; and the youthful Scot became every moment more interested in so superior a being as he found Clarence to be.

How is it that the polish of exterior grace awakens so instantaneous an interest in the heart? The homeliest and the most uncouth, as equally sensible of the ills of life, should be equally the objects of commiseration; but the fact is, we love to be addressed through the medium of the imagination, and we more readily lean to that which pleases the fancy, than to that which offends it. But if this is common to minds in general, how much more so is it the error of cultivated ones, who (without morbid or fastidious feeling) will naturally cleave to that which assimilates to their own nature and habits, sooner than to that which is violently opposed to them. Under the influence of pity thus heightened, Malcolm first beheld Clarence, and conceived a friendship for him: under the same influence, Caroline saw and loved him. Mankind seem agreed to bestow their admiration and applause on those distinctions which are derived from nature, rather than on those obtained by effort, be that effort as laudable as it may: hence beauty and genius, qualities as independent of our own exertions as our very being, every where meet that involuntary homage, which is most gratifying to human ambition. While the severest toil, or the strictest worth often passes un-

noticed, or when its evidences are too striking to remain unobserved, are met with that measured praise, that unimpassioned tone, which speaks we are discharging a duty, rather than fulfilling a pleasure. Both in that happy season of life when the heart expands with the genial approach of kindness on one side, and confidence on the other, Malcolm and Clarence soon became friends. The former, eager to attest in more than mere words the truth and strength of his attachment, persuaded the latter to remove to lodgings in the vicinity of his own, recommended him to his tailor, and began seriously to reflect on some plan that might place Clarence in a situation more suited to his talent and character. So that on the last visit Miss Belmont paid, she learned that he should that day change his residence, and he added a request to know where he might send the miniature, which, though this was the third setting, would yet require some touches before it was fitted for delivery. Unwilling to give her name, she replied that she was leaving town immediately, but if favoured with his card she would send for it on her return. Clarence saw there was some motive for concealment, he bowed in acquiescence, and as a testimony that he understood and would not violate the privacy she desired, he carefully locked up the picture ere attending her to the coach. How to fulfill her own wishes and those of Miss Auber with regard to the remuneration which she so eagerly desired immediately to make, she was for a moment at a loss, but an expedient soon presented itself, which she did not put in practice till she was seated in the carriage and on the

point of driving off; when, desiring him to make a duplicate of the miniature, she put a folded paper into his hand and bade him adieu.

Clarence had hardly regained his room, and discovered it was a bank note for thirty pounds, ere he heard the quick step of Malcolm on the stairs, and believing himself at last in a fair way for fortune's favours, he obeyed the summons of his new friend and bade a final adieu to Mrs. Laggon whom he left with no feelings of regret: far other were the emotions with which he turned to the humble Margaret, whom he with much difficulty forced to accept a parting token, which, while it was beyond his means, was far within what she merited.

That evening Clarence passed at Malcolm's lodgings in Wimpole Street, surrounded by every comfort, sustained by the cheerful society of his host, and confident of an eventful triumph over his adverse fortune. While the generous Noel was even more happy, more gay than the being he had rescued from abandonment, who was so lately—

> "From the first of joys
> Society, cut off and left alone
> Amid this world."

The part he acted sufficiently proves how little he was tainted by the narrow principles and views of society. The man of the world, habituated to the hearing, and probably sometimes experiencing, the deceptions continually put in practice, is assailed by a thousand suspicions, unknown to a being feeling and thinking like Malcolm; he will perhaps put down a guinea to a subscription, or give a crown to some

case of very evident wretchedness, but he will never throw open his doors to the reception of one in distress and obscurity, or give him the advantages of his credit and his countenance, without any restriction or limitation, but what the befriended individual may impose on himself.

Whatever faults and vices may be found concomitant with a cultivated imagination, cold unsympathizing inhumanity is rarely one of them; an appeal to the feelings of such is always acknowledged, although claims on their justice may often remain unanswered.

The bottle was pushed about, and the two friends were as happy as good wine and kind feelings could make them: their mutual confidence was great, but not unlimited. Malcolm breathed not a word of his disappointed love; nor Clarence of his secret passion. The former, who was prompt and decisive in all his plans of action, and never suffered pleasure to supersede the more important views of business, confined the conversation chiefly to his friend's present situation; he drew up before they parted an advertisement, which he undertook to have inserted in The Times, and after many mutual professions of regard Clarence retired to his new lodgings. With the delightful consciousness of having done a good action, Malcolm took up his chamber candle to go to bed; but again sat down to make some alterations in the proposed announcement, which ultimately ran thus:—

"*To the higher Orders and literary Circles of Society.*

"A gentleman who has received a liberal educa-

tion, who speaks English, French, and Italian fluently, has an extensive acquaintance with books in general, and with ancient and modern history in particular, is qualified for the situation of a *librarian* or *private secretary*, would wish to be employed in either capacity. The most satisfactory references as to character and talent will be given, &c. &c."

Having re-read and approved it, he folded and put it in his pocket-book; and peace that ever waits on worth, when blest in circumstance and well employed, strewed poppies on his pillow.

## CHAPTER XVII.

"Here the high Tor
Rears its mighty head, along whose broad bold base
Impatient Derwent foams, among the crags
Roaring impetuous, till his force all lost,
Gentle and still, a deep and silent stream,
He scarcely seems to move: o'er him the boughs
Bend their green foliage, shivering with the wind,
And dip into his surface."

In the course of a fortnight from the period of Lady Milsom's marriage, Adela was at Milsom Park with all the Aubers and Egremonts, the Elmers and

the Astons, and hundreds of names that embraced every possible combination of the four and twenty letters of the alphabet. Flirts from fifteen to fifty, and beaux from fourteen to fourscore: some beauty, much elegance, a great deal of *ton*, and still more pretension. Age was a vulgar term that no one knew the meaning of; fashion supplied every deficiency of character, conduct, and disposition, as credit did every defect of fortune.

The mansion, originally extensive and convenient, had undergone repairs and alterations so numerous and so advantageous, that to such of the visitors who had known it before, it was literally an old friend with a new face. A long suit of drawing-rooms, thrown one into another by folding doors, blazing with rich hangings, the most sumptuous furniture, splendid lustres and chandeliers; the ball room, the banquet room, the music and billiard rooms, the library, and conservatory, presented every resource that wealth could purchase, or luxury invent to chase the demon *ennui*.

The grounds were labyrinths of sweets, and mazes of beauty, where art following on the track of nature, heightened all her charms and obviated her incongruities, without that desecration, which not unfrequently takes place, when the landscape gardener and his wealthy employer commence their improvements, or rather machinations against good taste. In fact it might be said of Milsom Park, as was remarked of a noble mansion in its vicinity, that it contained every thing that was rich and elegant, yet in no instance had convenience been sacrificed to a vain display of superfluous ornament.

Matlock was at this period particularly full of visitors independent of those who thronged the mansion of the bridal pair. It baths had the attractions of fashion and the finest weather to offer, besides their chalybeate waters; landaus, barouches, Stanhopes, and phaetons, full of the gay sons and daughters of the *beau monde* were every where seen among the beautiful scenery of the romantic place. The bright waters of the Derwent reflected innumerable forms of blooming and graceful youth, who wandered beneath its luxuriant shades, or glided in numerous pleasure parties across its stream. The meandering course of the lovers' walk had in no season been trod by a more numerous assemblage. The rocks were every moment presenting to the gazer's eye some lone figure pausing in the midst of a picturesque scene, or groups climbing the heights for the sake of the prospect.

To Adela, who had a vivid taste for the beauties of nature, all this was unspeakably delightful, but still more grateful to her heart was the reception she met from the gentle and lovely bride, whose happiness, whose virtues, were alike singular. Seldom does humanity realize a felicity so perfect; and still more rarely is it the lot of worth so well deserving it, and so little envied. There was a peace, an unobtrusive sweetness about Lady Milsom that charmed all and alarmed none.

"Mild as the opening morn's serenest ray,
Mild as the close of summer's softest day,
Her form, her virtues, (form'd alike to please,
With artless charms, and unassuming ease;)

On every breast their mingled influence stole,
And in sweet union breathed one beauteous whole."

Her power consisted in a gentle influence, exerted without effort, and as unconsciously submitted to as it was exercised. Her dress elegant, but simple; her manner graceful, but retiring; she never formed a striking figure in the circles of the gay world, and therefore moved no feelings of envy. She never stood forth as a candidate for distinction and notoriety, nor threatened to distance the weak and vain competitors that started every moment for some prize of vanity and ambition. She was rather a spectator, than an actor in the busy scene before her; but a spectator of so mild a character, that the victor and the vanquished alike sought the repose of her society, after the triumph of conquest, or the chagrin of defeat—the first secure of mild gratulations unmixed with envy; the latter of the lenient soothings of a kind regret unvitiated by sneers. Thus with the universal character of the sweet Lady Milsom, it might be imagined she was commonplace and insipid, but her worth was not the less intrinsic for being known to few. It was to the husband of her love that her virgin bosom opened all its treasure; 'twas his to discover the calm wisdom of a soul fed by reflection and observation; the pure and warm feelings of a heart unhackneyed in the parade of passion and of sentiment; the mild dignity of a character that formed just estimates, and marked the distinct limits of every duty, and of every virtue; at once too wise for excess, and too warm-hearted to be wanting in any of the sympathies or charities of life.

She was a friend of the most valuable description, and one whom Adela peculiarly required; hers were the mild, the perspicuous reasonings, that corrected the false colourings of a vivid imagination; hers were the just and equal feelings, that chastened the excess of a highly cherished sensibility, and without demanding, or even desiring their subversion, marshalled them under the mild prescripts of judgment and of virtue.

Had Adela known her, ere yet the basis of character was fixed, how much romantic fancy and hectic feeling had been subdued or expelled. In place of indulging wild vision of unattainable happiness, she would have formed reasonable plans of rational enjoyment; instead of yielding to the pruriency of a delicate sensibility, she would have braced her feelings to that tone, which, while they were the friends of her felicity, they would not be the foes of her virtue.

But Adela took refuge in her bosom after all the mischief was done; when her heart had become a prey to hopeless and a guilty passion; when her peace had been immolated at the shrine of her imagination. In the soul-lit, passion-speaking eyes of Seeton Auber, she had kindled the torch, that was to light the funeral pyre of her mental innocence; in the indulged contemplations of his captivating graces, his manly charms, his brilliant genius, she added force to the flame she should have smothered; and the circumstances that had informed her of his reciprocity, the nameless indication which every day spoke to her conscious and responding heart, that he loved her, instead of enforcing flight only induced

her stay. Yet Adela was no sensualist, who would have purchased pleasure at the expense of honour. Equally vivid in all her feelings, to her delinquency had been death. She lived but to love, and to love without hope; she did not even propose to herself the possibility of subduing her passion, or diverting her mind to other objects or to other scenes. To her 'twas luxury to catch the sound of his approaching footsteps, while every trembling fibre of her frame warned her, how fatal was the fascination which she would not spurn: 'twas luxury to hear the tones of his harmonious voice, even when addressing another; and to lean on his supporting arm was that delicious, that entrancing bliss, that wordless ecstacy, that can only speak in sighs, and which induced her to hang with a slight, but voluptuous pressure, to assure herself of the reality, that it was *his* arm that was sustaining her. Yet never did her thoughts for a moment indulge the possibility of being his, and she blamed herself for her disgust at the character of Miss Egremont, because she was suspicious of the origin of her feelings; and readily gave her credit for being more amiable than she appeared to an eye prejudiced by jealousy, if such it might be called: for Adela was not one of those violent beings who would rend her way to happiness, and destroy in a wild gust of frenzy every opposing object. Her nature was softness itself; and her heart, full of the devotion of love, had room for no other feeling; all she proposed to herself was to remain near the idol of her idolatry as long as circumstances and propriety would permit, and then, bearing his image with her to her native

vale, pass the remainder of her days in a devoted solitude and romantic constancy.

This resolution gave a steadier tone to her manner; the invariable effect of having an ultimate determination; and if she had lost much of the bewitching playfulness of her earlier nature, she had also resigned some of the deep melancholy that had of late prevailed over her spirits. She began to grow accustomed to the master passion of her soul, and could lay it deep in the bottom of her heart, while she took her part in the gaieties that surrounded her. She could speak, and be spoken to by the object of it without much *external* emotion, till he, who knew not it was the effect of a mind made up, believed again his fancy and his hopes had deceived him, and that the empire of her heart was not his.

Adela had many motives in joining actively in the pleasures and conversation of the circle in which she made so brilliant a figure, in spite of the obscurity of her birth and the narrowness of her fortune, the principal of which was avoiding the serious attentions of Frederic, and the distressing assiduities of Lord Egremont; though she had in a great measure found refuge from the latter in the newly acquired friendship of Lady Ruthven, who professed so singular and so sudden an attachment to her as to be seldom from her side.

The first week passed rapidly away, and the pleasures of Matlock seemed as exhaustless as its beauties. The bloom of Miss Belmont's cheek, which had been somewhat paled by a London atmosphere and London habits, began to regain its native tint of exquisite and

delicate brilliancy: her heart soothed by the sweet friendship of Lady Milsom, and her spirits sustained by her countenance and support, felt little from the occasional shafts of the covert envy of Miss Egremont and her clan. Caroline was all affection, ardent, animated, and zealous on every occasion in which our heroine became either the object of applause or detraction. Lady Ruthven distinguished her by continual attention, and evinced she was not the mere woman of fashion, by conversation that displayed much varied information and much strength and originality of idea. Captain Auber was kind and gentle whenever he had occasion to address her. Sir Hubert and his lady treated her with the cordiality and affection due to an avowed favourite of their dear Emilia; while the Earl of Errol seemed to regard her with even parental tenderness. Thus caressed and distinguished, surrounded by splendour and breathing in the midst of pleasures as varied as they were brilliant; with an imagination ever kindling, and a beauty ever heightening, Adela was the *Nourmahal* of Milsom Park.

Letters from France, announcing the impossibility of the Pomenars visiting England for many weeks, perhaps months, determined Lady Milsom no longer to delay her long promised *fête* of the creation of the knights of the Amaranth. The preparations were immediately commenced! and the announcement that the installation was to be followed by a fancy ball in which every one was to appear with the appropriate symbols of a character chosen from the heathen

mythology, set more classical inquiry afloat than had been agitated for some time.

Ladies who had long been in the habit of thinking themselves goddesses, were delighted at the opportunity of appearing as such. Vanity, that foe to good sense, and which like a serpent stings the bosom in which it is cherished, began to display itself in every variety. A knot of young ladies who had as much idea of the attributes of the muses, as a peacock has of music, came to the agreement of representing the nine: though Caroline who happened to be near them suggested their personating the *Pierides*, (nine presumptuous Thessalian girls who challenged the muses to a trial of skill, and were defeated and changed into *magpies;*) this suggestion was not attended to, probably because it was not understood; and their arrangements proceeded. Miss Barbara Blouse, whose round fat rosy face would have suited a *Bacchante*, voted herself *Melpomene*. Her sister Diana, from an unfortunate accident in her infancy, had a slight limp incident to a deficiency in the length of one of her legs, but then she had by way of indemnity a superabundance in the size of her foot, and she proposed herself as the representative of *Terpsichore*. Penelope, who stuttered so terribly, as at times not to be able to pronounce her own name, (they were a gifted family,) declared her intention of appearing as the muse of eloquence; and her dear friend and inseparable, Selina Mopus, with a pale hollow-cheeked emaciated visage, that would have made the fortune of a methodist, would be nothing (which of course meant

remaining in *propria persona*) unless she was allowed to appear as *Thalia.* A young lady who had in the course of that day confounded *Junius Brutus* with *Robert Bruce,* christened herself *Clio,* the muse of History.

Caroline rose from the sofa which she had occupied in their vicinity, looked archly at her brother Seeton who was leaning on the back of Adela's chair, and paying very little attention to any of the surrounding objects, exclaimed as she passed him—

"In the beginning of things *Chaos* was created."

The very spirit of waggery inhabited the breast of Caroline, and she now saw a very fair field for its indulgence before her. The only commodity in the market was self, an article seldom below par, but on this occasion far above it. The sight of Frederic in the midst of a group, looking as wild and as wicked as he could, assured her of sport, and she soon formed one of the party, prepared to be coadjutor or auxiliary in any scheme of mischief he might be upon. She found him in earnest conversation with a personage I shall take this opportunity of introducing to my readers. This was Robert Bolton Esq. son and heir of the Bolton of Threadneedle Street to whom Lord Egremont had desired Mrs. Laggon to address any communication she might wish to make to his lordship. He was a little stumpy fellow, with a countenance very like that of Gibbon the historian, always saving and excepting the eye, that sure indicative of mind and feeling. Mr. Bolton's little orbs of intelligence were something of the colour of water-

gruel, and about as brilliant, and certainly were as unfit to act as the telegraphs of his intellect (if he had any) as can well be conceived. It was in vain that fashion endeavoured to adorn a form, which, cast in the hippopotamus mould, seemed slovenly by prescriptive right. It was equally in vain that society enforced certain restrictions upon the natural freedom of this unique specimen of human nature; the loud laugh, abhorrent to any one imbued with one spark of the spirit of Chesterfield, he indulged in to an excess not very advantageous to his appearance, since it discovered a capacity of mouth, to which had his intellect been commensurate, he had been the Solomon of the age; but there was a drawback even on this advantage, in the paucity of teeth that inhabited it, and which, to desecrate a very common simile, were,

"Like angels' visits, few and far between."

They looked like the mournful emblems of delapidation, even at the very moment he was performing a peal equal to what might have issued from the mouth of the old Tom of Lincoln.

The father of this obstreperous person, had formerly been a dealer in spiritous liquors, the most productive of all *spiritual* pursuits in this *material* world, and by dint of industry, good fortune, and an unsophisticated devotion to his own interest, and an equally unsophisticated disregard to the interests of others, he in course of time was enabled to dignify himself with the more respectable appellation of wine-merchant. To adopt an old joke; from being a rogue in spirit, he became a rogue in grain, and then a rogue

in general, otherwise a general merchant. He was also willing to undertake the agency business of those who liked their dirty work done by deputy, and in this way he was of material use to Lord Egremont, who besides other more substantial considerations, rewarded his diligence by giving his countenance to young Bolton, who thus, and by the aid of being the inheritor of the riches of a wealthy East India trading uncle, got introduced into the world, and was received in drawing-rooms when he was fit only for a *menagerie*.

Young Bolton, with a great share of hereditary shrewdness and cunning, was deficient in that common sense which can alone make a man respectable. As learning gives a fool more opportunities of exposing himself, so did wealth furnish Bolton with means to make himself ridiculous. Vanity was the prevailing foible of his character: it blinded him to the defects of his person; and without one requisite for distinction, he panted for display.

If ever there were a fair subject for ridicule, here was one; and when Caroline advanced, she found her brother debating with him, whether he had better personate *Apollo* or *Adonis*. Caroline with admirable gravity joined in; though at the moment the idea that he would be only a fit representative of the wild boar which killed the favourite of Venus, was uppermost in her mind: for she could not conceive even *Vulcan* or any of his assisting *Cyclops* half so hideous as Mr. Robert Bolton.

"Now if you would allow me to advise," she said, after listening a few minutes, "you would give the

preference to *Mercury*. First of all, as the messenger of the gods, you will be able to show your gallantry and light heels to the ladies; secondly, he is the god of merchants, and of all those ingenious devices by which they progressively rise to fortune and distinction."

"Now Miss Caroline," cried the weak and vain booby, "I'm always afraid of you."

"Then," she continued, taking no notice of his observation, "with your *petasus* on your head, and your *talaria* at your heels, your *caduceus* in your hand, if you mind your P's and Q's—"

"Hold, hold," interrupted Bolton "*Potatoes* on my head, *celery* at my heels, and *cabbages* in my hand! and then my *peas!* that would look very well, truly! I'd better have a donkey and panniers had'nt I?"

Here a burst of uncontrolable laughter from Frederic, in which every one within hearing joined, made the very roof echo, and with the united efforts of many, almost equalled some of Bolton's solitary exploits in that way.

"This is always the way with you, Miss Caroline," cried the offended cit. "I don't half like it, I can tell you

Unable to recover sufficient self-command to appease him, she made good her retreat, and was flying across the room like another *Camilla*, with a step of life and lightness, when Mr. Chudleigh, as much fascinated by her wit as her beauty, intercepted her way. The inheritor of a large fortune, and in the event of an elder brother dying without issue, the heir to a title, he was what is usually termed an eligible match;

but what had infinitely more weight with the better part of the Auber family, he was a young man of much unpretending worth and talent: therefore in addition to the Captain, he had Caroline's brothers, her uncle and aunt, and Lord Milsom and his sweet bride, all warmly in his favour, and ready to advocate his cause on every occasion. No one but our heroine could understand Caroline; she was neither a prude, nor a coquet; full of youth, beauty, and animation, her insensibility appeared perfectly incomprehensible, for the idea of any other attachment never occurred, as there was nothing to lead to such a suspicion.

"And in what character shall I have the pleasure of addressing *you* at the common festival?" said the half gay, half melancholy Chudleigh, as he attempted to take her hand.

"Oh! I am saved all the trouble of an assumption," replied she gayly, "for I hold an office about the person of Amarantha, and am beside a Grand Cross.

"That you are," observed her father, who was not far off, with something of the spirit of retaliation.

"And I am a Grand Cross too," said Lady Milsom, smiling, as she joined them.

"Then it's for the first time in your life," said Mr. Chudleigh.

"Ah!" said Caroline, "I shall see you and my lord there, who by the bye is flirting with Mrs. Braymore, returning from Dunmow some day with a gammon of bacon fastened behind the carriage, after having knelt on the two sharp stones, and sworn the oath so few can swear."

"I beg your pardon," said Lady Milsom, "not five minutes since we had a terrible quarrel."

"Then my lady you hav'nt saved your bacon!" exclaimed Bolton, and then performing an extra peal of laughter in honour of his own wit, resumed his good humour. "I hope I shall manage better than that some day," he continued, "then what with the *bacon*, and the *cabbage* and *potatoes* that Miss Caroline there was so good as to men ion, I sh ll do well enough on short-commons days."

Lady Milsom not happening to be in the room at the time of the general laugh against Bolton, and now not understanding a word he said, thought him a greater fool than ever.

"And if is not a very great secret," cried Lady Ruthven, "what did you and my lord differ about?"

"Only about arrangements: Miss Belmont wished to resign her post to me, and my lord seconded her: but I would suffer no infringement of my original plan. Secondly, we disagreed as to the number of the knights: since the arrangements have been thrown wholly on Caroline and me, we have made our elections, and from our awards there shall be no appeal."

"What is this I hear?" cried Lord Egremont pressing into the circle. "It sounds to me very like a party-system. Why, Mr. Auber, we must lose no time in drawing up a declaration of rights."

"Indeed my lord," replied Seeton, "if I had not the utmost faith in the framers of the laws, I should tremble for their impartiality."

"Then indeed," cried Frederic, I have no opinion of

the lenity of the enactments where Caroline is the legislatress."

"Nor I neither, Mr. Frederic," exclaimed Bolton. "After you're seeing she wanted to make me the *market-man* as she called him, with greens a top of my head in a ball room, there's no knowing what she may not speculate upon doing to us."

"Upon my honour there is a great deal of truth in Mr. Bolton's observation," said Lord Egremont.

"Let us resolve ourselves into a committee of inquiry," cried Frederic.

"Stay, stay, my gentle coz." interrupted Lady Milsom. "Allow me to inquire to whom in this mansion does authority belong? I would have ye to know, ye rebellious spirits, and thou son of anarchy and misrule," addressing herself especially to Frederic, "that this is an hierarchy, composed of three embracing in their persons all the functions of the purest and the highest mortal government. We the two Ladies Grand Cross frame the institutes, and Amarantha confirms them, and the motto of our order is—

'A LADY CAN DO NO WRONG.'"

The playful humour, and assumptive gravity with which Lady Milsom spoke, delighted every one. It was so seldom she stepped forward to take a conspicuous part in the passing scene, that its novelty alone was sufficient to render it pleasing.

The gentlemen fell back as if overcome by a sense of their presumption.

"We must appeal by way of petition," said Seeton, turning to his companions.

"There will be no sittings to receive them," replied his sister; "therefore spare yourselves such useless trouble," and she exchanged looks with Lady Milsom, full of the liveliest expression of archness and vivacity.

"How truly it is said," observed the bridegroom, "that 'evil communications corrupt good manners.' Here is my Emilia whom I remember once so gentle and so kind, that she was—

> 'Like the sweet south
> That breathes upon a bank of violets,
> Stealing and giving odours,'

now as wayward and as inclined to mischief as her fair cousin and counsellor could desire."

"But there is one," said Lord Egremont, advancing to our heroine, "whose gentle nature no circumstance can change. You will not permit enactments prejudicial to our interests and our happiness," he added, addressing her exclusively.

"Like all sovereigns my lord," replied she smiling, "I must be guided by my ministers.

"Then like all ministers, these fair ladies," said his lordship, turning to the lovely cousins, "must be conciliated. If the remark of a great statesman is true, that all have their price, I shall not despair of purchasing their suffrage. Tell me," he continued, addressing Caroline, "how I may hope to bribe you to act with all your wonted ability in our behalf: how may we deprecate any fatal machinations against us?"

Enjoying the incertitude and apprehension she had created, she rose with an air of mock majesty, and gently pushing his lordship from her, replied—

> "Your Grace shall pardon me, I will not back;
> I am too high-born to be property'd;
> To be a secondary at control,
> Or useful serving man, or instrument
> To any sovereign state throughout the world"

Mr. Bolton, who stood open-mouthed, was particularly struck with Miss Auber's air and dignified person, and turning to her brother Frederic, after he had watched her retiring figure, as accompanied by Adela and Lady Milsom she left the drawing-room, expressed his admiration in terms of the most unqualified praise. Frederic instantly conceived the idea of instigating Bolton to make proposals to her, being much of the opinion of Queen Elizabeth with regard to Falstaff, that to see him in love would be the height of the ludicrous. Young Auber was in the highest spirits; though generally suspicious of his sister, he felt tolerably secure, that at the present period he might depend on her good offices; he therefore prepared his scheme of sport in the full certainty that nothing would occur to mar the mirth it would create. Insurmountably difficult as appeared the task he had assigned himself, he succeeded to a miracle: he found a powerful auxiliary in the strong spirit of conceit and self-love, that inhabited the breast which he assailed, and he left Bolton resolved to seize the first favourable opportunity of declaring himself, and in the mean time he agreed to put himself under Frederic's

tutorage as to the most approved method of making love. Some observations he made on Miss Auber's turning the laugh against him so frequently; but her brother assured him it was nothing but pique at his backwardness in perceiving her *penchant*.

Strutting about full of the new idea which had been infused into his brain, he suddenly found himself near Captain Auber, who, though regarding him in common with every one else with contempt and ridicule, had his reasons for treating him with civility; the extended hand of the booby was therefore shaken, and the Captain remarked that this was the first opportunity he had had of making inquiries as to whom he was in mourning for.

"Why who do you guess now?" said he with a bread grin of satisfaction on his face.

"I assure you I cannot."

"Why old Nicholas my rich East-India uncle, and I'm his heir and humble servant."

"My dear sir," cried the Captain with increasing cordiality of tone, "I most sincerely wish you joy. But I always thought your uncle had a family abroad."

"No such thing—a few tawny brats—no right to a farthing."

Oh! of course not!" cried the Captain coolly, taking a pinch of snuff, and rapping the box with his disengaged fingers, after the forefinger and thumb had appropriated a second pinch. "What false reports are perpetually spreading! I heard that he had married a very fine native woman, who had brought him considerable property."

"Not a word of truth in it! all humbug!" answered Bolton with an expression of anger and irritation, at the bare supposition of such an event."

"Oh! no doubt!" chimed in the Captain, and he was rising from his seat, where Bolton detained him. Nothing is so quick as thought; and as he read the expression of the cit's face which evidently betrayed that he had something to say, that he knew not how to express, the vivid apprehension of the Captain conceived he was going to speak of the large sum in which he stood indebted to Bolton's father.

"I was going to mention a little affair to you, Captain," said he with a timid wriggling air. The listener looked his anxiety but made no reply; and the embarrassed booby was obliged to proceed.

"I wish father was here—he has such a way—he takes the right sow by the ear directly."

Captain Auber who found his ear taken in no very pleasant manner, was anxious to end the colloquy, and replied—

"I think I know what you mean."

"Oh! do you," cried Bolton much relieved. "Then you'll do what you can—you ar'n't offended I hope, Captain?"

"Oh! not in the least, not in the least," replied he, who was too great an adept in dissembling to betray any discomposure. "I only wonder it has not been mentioned to me before."

"Oh! then you saw it did you?" said the delighted Bolton. "You know exactly how matters stand betwixt us?"

"Oh! perfectly, perfectly," replied the perplexed

debtor, "and I will do every thing to facilitate an early arrangement."

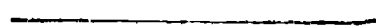
"Well now that's hearty!" exclaimed Bolton taking the Captain's hand. "But lauk, only think of every body's seeing it before I did! aye mother always said I had such *taking-ways*, that she couldn't scold me, even when I stole the sugar."

This remark did not reach the Captain, who at the moment offered his arm to Mrs. Saugrober to attend her to the dining-room.



## CHAPTER XIX.

"You have done our pleasures very much grace fair ladies,
Set a fair fashion on our entertainment,
Which was not half so beautiful and kind;
You've added worth unto 't and lively lustre,
And entertained me with my own device;
I am to thank you for it." TIMON OF ATHENS.



THE days that intervened previous to the great *fête* were passed in much preparation, and the usual routine of amusements. Pleasure and display were the aim of all. Art and nature alike poured forth their exhaustless stores to contribute to the first, and wealth and vanity did their utmost for the latter.

In contemplating society apart from the false gloss with which it decks itself: how few do we observe who bring to the scene of festivity a mind attuned to enjoyment. Every breast is a little empire of varying interest, and contending passions. Hope, and fear; expectation and disappointment; security and distrust, flit through the brain like the figures of a magic lantern, and often withdraw the spirit from the scene of revelry, while the body stalks about like an automaton, moving as it were by instinct, acting mechanically, and carried along the crowd by the impulse of association. Of those who are suffocated at assemblies, deafened in drawing-rooms and *conversaziones*, bewildered at balls, and jammed into theatres and exhibitions, scarcely one out of a thousand really taste of pleasure, while all pretend to do so.

How many at Milsom Park wore the semblance of satisfaction and delight, while their minds were a prey to the tumult of passion, and the vapidity of weariness. Some sung at the moment they would have rather sighed—smiled when they were most inclined to frown, and lauded where they loathed. Passions which dared not be evinced, kept gaining strength from concealment; while feelings were tortured by the perpetual recurrence of incidents and events which threatened destruction to a thousand hopes, and realization to as many fears. Thus it is that Dr. Johnson's remark is borne out, "that life is every where a state in which much is to be endured, and little to be enjoyed."

Some few whose vacuity of mind was unbroken by recollections of the past, or anticipations of the future,

glided down the stream with unruffled complacency; apparently as insensible to pleasure as to pain. Others impressed with an overpowering sense of their own merits, approached as near perfect felicity as perfect self-satisfaction can bring us: among these were various young ladies, with pretty faces, slight figures, and flowing ringlets; and sundry young gentlemen with small waists, well-curled hair and well-setting stocks; the only stocks by the bye which they possessed, their funds of wealth being as unconsolidated as their funds of wit; and if any question had been agitated as to the per cents, whether consols or reduced, they might have consoled themselves by reflecting that *theirs* were reduced to the *eau de Cologne* in their handkerchiefs, or the *pomade divine* in their hair. Many of these happy insignificants were destined in no very distant period to play *racket* in the Bench, as well as they did out of it, or else to give their creditors *caper* sauce to their mutton, and carry their empty heads and pockets into another country, in order to disgrace the British character abroad, as they had already done their own at home.

Other disciples of vanity and folly there were also, whose felicity was not so unqualified, as the beings we have just alluded to: among these were many who had been overtaken by age, an affliction as anxiously avoided as death, and as vehemently disclaimed as a poor relation. Hence stiff joints, asthmatic affections, and all the ills that age is heir to, were disregarded; dumpy dowagers with corns of sixty years maturity, danced with young cornets, whose heels where as light as their heads. Antiquated beaux,

with wigs judicious, made to hide the crow's-foot at the temple, flirted away with all their toes, to the manifest inconvenience of their sympathetic joints and exhausted lungs. Not merely dancing, but long walks and rides, scrambling up rocks, and down brakes, martyred these deniers of the guilt of age; who, had they dared to acknowledge it, had preferred a soft bed and an easy chair to all that pleasure could offer. But assumption must be supported, and vanity continued to lead out her martyrs by scores. Figures perversely at variance with symmetry were tortured into proportion,

> "Hands, lips, and eyes were put to school,
> And each instructed feature had its rule."

Thus were the efforts of art and the charms of nature rendered nugatory; pleasure became a penalty; amusement a toil; yet the heroism of vanity uttered no complaint, the dandy would not have relaxed one tenth of an inch of his stay lace, for that ease which would have compromised the beauty of his figure: nor the *ci devant jeune homme* have relinquished a feat that might implicate him of possessing more years by a score than he acknowledged.

The most happy, because their happiness was built on a solid basis, were Lord and Lady Milsom, and to them might be added their respective parents. Adela and Caroline, Seeton and Frederic, existed in a species of delirium, their imaginations kindled by the surrounding objects, and their feelings perpetually subject to every degree of excitement and depression. One moment was the ecstacy of hope and passion;

the next the gloom of fear and doubt. This instant they sparkled with irrepressible gaiety, which the next faded into pensive sadness. Yet of all that have been reviewed, none felt as Lady Ruthven and Lord Egremont; her's were the reproaches of guilt, the cravings of revenge. She had "been abused, insulted, and betrayed," and would have vengeance, as the only reparation that was left her · he was all guilty terror; still more guilty hope. Every hour his dread of his infuriated paramour augmented, and his passion for Adela increased: to avoid the one, and to obtain the other, were objects that appeared equally unattainable. The post Lady Ruthven had taken as the friend of his intended victim, was one of two-fold annoyance to him; she at once marred all his plans, and was a spy on all his looks, words, and actions: if circumstances for a moment withdrew her, not therefore was his access to Adela more free; love and admiration drew a circle round her of the handsomest and most distinguished, and after having sometimes with much effort made his way through "the circling Cyclades," he found it labour in vain; for Lady Ruthven was again at her side before he had time to utter a word. Thus in the midst of pleasure, sparkling beauty, and unbounded luxury, were this iniquitous pair utterly and hopelessly miserable. Scarcely less so, though from causes less violent, and motives in some respects different, were Captain Auber and Miss Egremont. The former *cruized* about like a ship sent out to make discoveries, and he certainly succeeded to admiration. He always had the satisfaction of discovering something, though it

usually happened to be that which gave him least pleasure; for instance, he would discover his eldest son keeping up a whispering conversation with Miss Belmont, in whose face he would at the same time discover sundry smiles and blushes of the most bewitching delight and the most beautiful confusion: having succeeded in carrying away his off spring from the "smiling mischief;" he next beheld the checked and melancholy Chudleigh vainly endeavouring to fix the attention of his erratic daughter for a moment. When coming round to the point from whence he started, he would find Frederic doing homage at the very shrine from which he had so lately dragged his brother. While she who endangered all seemed perfectly secure, even from the gallantry of his noble friend and ally, Lord Egremont.

To Sophia, the betrothed of Seeton, the circle of pleasure was like the spiked barrel in which *Regulus* was rolled, every circumvolution only pierced her with additional pangs. The Circean cup of pleasure was a poisoned bowl; out-vied in beauty, wit, and splendour, vainly did she essay to rally her spirits, which nothing but the strong stimulant of malice and hatred could have kept at all afloat. Seeton had become more beautiful than she had ever beheld him; he used to stand by her side peerless in form, but almost as unmoved as a statue, and *then* she was proud of him. What had she been *now*, when every charm was heightened, every talent, every grace called forth under the influence of passion and enthusiasm? He was a being to see, not to describe. Yet now she had lost him! well could she understand, and bitterly

did she contrast his cold civility, his tame attentions, his stately politeness to her, and his glowing delight, his deep homage, and fond devotion when addressing Miss Belmont. Passion had gained so much on each that neither were conscious how much they betrayed themselves to observation. Adela was not aware of the glow, which would not be repressed when Seeton Auber approached her; nor was he sensible of the expression that enthroned itself in his eyes when he looked on her. Whispers began to circulate, and conjectures and surmises were agitated, which sometimes by accident, sometimes by design met the ear of Miss Egremont. All her passion for Seeton turned to hatred, her envy of our heroine became confirmed detestation; and to be revenged of both was her dearest hope. To effect this she yearned for the day that was to rivet the manacles that shackled her faithless lover: she burned to breathe the vows that would make him hers for ever, and for ever divide him from the being he loved. Then should his nuptial home be the temple of misery, and the wife revenge the wrongs of the mistress.

In the midst of this scene of varying emotions, views, and designs of love, hatred, vanity, interest, ambition, and revenge, Mr. Bolton, "like a sturdy evergreen" was still the same. Every day he laughed more like a rhinoceros, and looked more like Caliban.

Among the visitors at the Park there were many not a little influenced by his ample fortune, and by them he was caressed; while others attacked him with irony and turned him out for sport with a wit too

keen and too delicate to offend him, since it was wholly beyond the reach of his opaque intellect: these attentions therefore made amends for the neglect and contempt he met from others; and having received some little encouragement from Caroline who entered into her brother's scheme, he capered into the room like a porpus in disguise on the night of the grand *fête* in the highest spirits and in the character of *Zephyrus* having declined personating *Cupid*, though Frederic had promised him a flaxen wig, and a pair of gossamer wings for the occasion.

In the principal drawing-room a throne with a canopy was erected for Amarantha, and the long suit of apartments blazed with lights and the most splendid and elegant decorations. The company, consisting of every species of fantastic assumption, presented a scene of the most lively and brilliant variety. Lady Ruthven aptly appeared as *Juno*, and carried herself with queenly grace and dignity. A young lady in a rainbow guaze was a lovely *Iris*, and kept in close attendance on her ladyship. Miss Melville was there as Diana, and so truly appeared what she personated, that it might be imagined she was just returned from the woodland chase,

> "Her bow across her shoulder slung
> Her buskins gemmed with morning dew,"

while many of her satellites appeared as her attendant nymphs. *Ceres*, *Flora*, the Graces, and many of the more sweet and simple of the heathen deities were personated by blooming graceful girls, who displayed

their elegant and judicious taste in the selection and disposition of their ornaments. The Grecian and Roman costume adorned many of the young men who supported their respective characters with spirit and propriety; among these Frederic was a perfect *Alcibiades*; like his prototype when among the Asiatics, he was all splendour, grace, and gaiety. Seeton was the Trojan Prince *Æneas*, and appeared as brilliant and as happy as we may suppose the founder of *Lavinium* to have been after he had surmounted all the difficulties of his fortune, and married the daughter of *Latinus*. Lord Egremont, Lord Milsom, Mr. Chudleigh, and many others appeared, perhaps with less grace, but with equal propriety, and almost as much spirit: while on the other hand numerous incongruities met the eye, and a still greater number the mind's eye. Many there were who only excited the smile of those who knew them intimately, and who could contrast their real with their assumed characters, but whose dress and bearing would have excited nothing but admiration in the stranger. But there were also skilful jackdaws, who in spite of their borrowed plumage betrayed their origin every moment. Asses who covered themselves with the lion's hide, but discovered themselves by their bray. Of this number, to say nothing of our friend Bolton and the tuneful *nine*, were Messrs. Fearman and Shadowsshade, who strutted about as *Achilles* and *Hercules*: the first a pale weak-voiced anatomy, the latter even still smaller, thinner, and more feeble. The moment Caroline beheld, she designated them, as—

"Death the skeleton
And Time the shadow."

Miss Egremont, who should have appeared as *Medusa*, bore the name of *Portia*, and her fair friends personated a number of virtues which they had never even heard of before; so that for once in *her* life and theirs, they were surrounded by meekness, truth, charity, &c. &c.

Soft music at length announced the approach of Amarantha, who heralded, by two youthful pages dressed in green and gold, and bearing incense, entered about eleven o'clock attended by Lady Milsom, Miss Auber, and a train of attendant ladies. Having passed up the room she seated herself on the throne, while Caroline and Emilia occupied sumptuous chairs on each side of her. Never did Adela appear otherwise than beautiful, but on the present occasion, aided by a dress of oriental magnificence, high spirits, and the splendour of the surrounding scene, she transcended all her former looks. She had a smile for every one, and a perpetual variety of the loveliest expression kindled in her face—

"If tenderness touched her, the dark of her eye
At once took a darker, a heav'nlier die;
From the depth of whose shadow, like holy revealings
From the innermost shrine, came the light of her feelings.
Then her mirth, O! 'twas sportive as ever took wing,
From the heart with a burst like the wild bird in spring,
Illumined by wit that would fascinate sages,
Yet playful as peris just loose from their cages;
While her laugh, full of life, without any control,
But the sweet one of gracefulness, rung from her soul,
And where it most sparkled no glance could discover,
In lips, cheek, or eyes, for she brightened all over."

Every eye was fixed on her, as if she was some beautiful vision, that would pass if they looked away Every feeling of love and admiration that had ever glowed towards her, burned with new fire. Every fear that her charms had awakened gathered fresh strength. The hand and arm that rested on the crimson velvet throne, white and polished as Parian marble, one moment arrested the gazer's eye, the next it fell upon her glossy ringlets, and the ivory neck round which they sported; and unsated admiration had continued to gaze without demanding more than the privilege of contemplating the still changing, and exquisite beauties of her face, when Caroline rose, and summoned the knights who were to be invested with the order. The first she named was her brother Frederic: he advanced from the circle with a countenance brilliant with delight; that precedency which was the mere effect of his sister's partiality, he attributed to Adela's preference, and all the sanguine hopes of happy love kindled in his soul. He bowed and took his place on the left hand side of the throne. The next she called on was Seeton; but absorbed in the overpowering feelings of his passion, he did not immediately hear it, but recovering himself he passed to the side of his brother. Thus in rotation were called Lord Milsom, Lord Egremont, Lord Edward Elmer, (a young nobleman lately come of age and possessing a fine estate in the neighbourhood of Dove Dale,) and last, but as he fondly trusted not least, Mr. Chudleigh, though his admission was entirely owing to the kind interference of Lady Milsom, who in right of her privilege named him as one of the knights Postulant.

As soon as the gentlemen were selected, Caroline addressed them with much gravity

"Our well beloved mistress invites you to her throne to invest you with the insignia of the order of the Amaranth, when you shall have first entered into the engagement to perform the obligations following:—

1. That a knight of the Amaranth shall believe and maintain that a lady can do no wrong.
2. He shall inviolably, inexpressibly, ineffably, and unutterably adore even the shadow of his mistresses shoe-tie.
3. That his thoughts shall never wander from her, not even when he is before a looking-glass.
4. He is never to sleep more than three consecutive minutes, and during them to dream of his mistress and of her alone.
5. That he sing every night during the winter from sunset to sunrise under her window,

   'Humpy Dumpy sat upon a wall,'

   with variations; and the harder the wind blows, the louder he is to sing; and be it hail, rain, or snow, the melodious knight, as he values his knighthood must neither cough, nor sneeze, nor shiver.
6. That he live on nothing but his lady's smiles, with occasionally a silver moonbeam, and a balmy dew drop.
7. That he be absent and abstracted in company, never comprehending or replying appropriately to any thing; and on these occasions to inadver-

tently swallow the decanter instead of his wine, if possible, stand and all.

Lastly, He must give evident symptoms of pining away in a consumption whenever his mistress has a fit of the vapours; be seized with sudden madness if he is so unfortunate as to displease her, and to expire without a groan of a paralysis of the heart if she frowns."

There was far more in the manner in which these institutes were read, to produce a comic effect, than in the enactments themselves; the smile and laugh was general, but Bolton brayed like a delighted donkey.

After the pause of a moment or two, Caroline waved her hand, and Frederic approached.

"You promise," cried she, smiling archly, "to observe these articles?"

He bowed as he replied with an answering smile, "I do."

She then led him to Adela, before whom he dropped on one knee, who rising hung the badge of the order, pendent to an Amaranthine ribbon, around his neck, and touching his shoulder with her ivory sceptre bade him rise a knight; he kissed her hand, rose, and again mingled in the circle of spectators. While the same ceremony accompanied the investiture of the five remaining knights.

The moment it concluded the band struck up a fine piece of music, while many choral voices sung the following lines:—

"Serene as beams the orb of night,
Clear as the skies when day is bright,
Limpid as streams which pebbles show
Amid the sands like pearls below,
 Be the fate that Heaven grant her;
 Hail! all hail! bright Amarantha

Sweet as the yet unopened rose,
Soft as the infant's lull'd repose,
True as the course the planets keep,
Pure as the tears that angels weep,
 Be the fate that Heaven grant her;
 Hail! all hail! bright Amarantha!"

At a signal the company adjourned to the ball-room, and the amusements of the evening commenced by Miss Egremont and Mr. Auber opening the ball, an arrangement that had been the result of the indefatigable captain's exertions. Seeton never danced with less spirit, and his partner looked on his amaranthine ribbon with the eyes of a basilisk. Frederic, as soon as he could approach Miss Belmont, solicited her hand, but had the mortification to find he had been anticipated by Lord Elmer, and that his brother had engaged her for the following dance. He had therefore no alternative but to make another selection, or stand like patience on a monument smiling in the midst of disappointment, till she should be again at liberty. He chose to do the latter, and watched with fascinated eyes the exquisite form of our heroine. Lord Milsom's offers to introduce him to a partner; oblique hints from mammas who had five, seven, and sometimes nine daughters, with a proportionate number of nieces on their hands; the angry admonitions of his father, who was *cruizing* about as usual, were all thrown away upon him. Lord Edward Elmer was

succeeded by Seeton, and again Adela's light form 'moved to the melody of music's note,' but with an expression so different, that it struck the watchful Frederic with the most fearful apprehension. Her step was more elastic; the buoyant and joyous carriage of her whole form; the sweet, the soft expression of her eyes, the brilliant animation of her countenance, and manner all more marked and vivid: hers was the

'loveliness ever in motion, which plays
Like the light upon autumn's soft shadow days,
Now here and now there giving light as it flies
From the lip to the cheek, from the cheek to the eyes.
Now melting in mists, and now breaking in gleams,
Like the glimpses a saint has of heaven in his dreams!
When pensive it seemed as if that very grace,
That charm of all others, was born in her face;
And when angry, for e'en in the tranquillest climes
Light breezes will ruffle the flowers sometimes,
Her short passing anger but served to awaken
New beauty, like flowers that are sweetest when shaken."

"Whence," Frederick asked himself, "this variety of emotion? What means that mutual understanding of which they seem themselves hardly conscious? How flattering is the sweet attention with which she listens to him, how still more flattering the reproving manner with which she checks him! Does Seeton forget that there is such a being as Sophia Egremont in the world?" As the thought occurred to him, he looked around, and observed that young lady equally busy with himself in taking cognizance of the two delinquent dancers. The intent and exclusive interest of Seeton's looks and attentions, the sweet and happy delight of Adela's, mutually struck them with the

pangs of corroding jealousy. Frederic was so overwhelmed by this new discovery, which it is somewhat surprising he did not sooner make, that he suffered Adela to return to her seat some time before he again addressed her, so that when he did, he found her engaged to Lord Egremont, and after him again to Lord Elmer. He just waited to mark the reluctance and delay with which Seeton resigned his partner's fair hand to his future father-in-law, and then stepping up to him, he whispered in his ear, and the brothers left the ball-room together.

They did not rejoin the company till after every one was seated at supper, and it was then remarked by those who had leisure to make observations, that the elder looked uneasy and abstracted, while the younger appeared flushed and angry. Adela was one of those who took note of the brothers, for seated by accident between two elderly gentlemen of the county, she had nothing to call off her attention. The long absence of Seeton had awakened much conjecture and some uneasiness in her bosom, and she now read in his looks and manners that something unpleasant had occurred. Her immediate neighbours were anxiously discussing the natural productions of Derbyshire, and at length became so loud and vehement, that they seemed to forget the common decorums of society. All the coal, sulphur, &c. with which their minds teemed, seemed to have ignited and to threaten a volcanic eruption, when Lady Milsom rose, which was the signal for the ladies retiring.

Dancing recommenced in the course of an hour, but not with its former spirit, at least as far as our

heroine and her immediate connection were concerned. Frederic had at length succeeded in obtaining her hand, but her vivacity had flown, and she suffered herself to be led down the last dances more as a beautiful automaton, than otherwise. Secton approached her no more, and pleading fatigue to Lady Milsom she was the first to leave the ball-room, anxious to escape the gallantries of many of the gentlemen who circled round her, as soon as her determination to dance no more was known.

Disappointment must ever be the consequence where many are pursuing the same object. To Frederic and Lord Egremont the evening had proved most unpropitious, and the knights of the Amarantha were rallied on their anti-brilliant looks. Miss Egremont told Mr. Auber with some bitterness, but with real pleasure, that he looked more like the knight of the woful countenance; and this remark, and the absence of Miss Belmont assisted the recovery of her spirits amazingly.

The night ended as most ball nights do—the jaded dancers wisely shunned the light of day, and as the rosy dawn began to steal along the skies, fled to the repose they stood so much in need of.

# CHAPTER XX

"Of Heaven's protection who can be
So confident to utter this—
To morrow I will spend in bliss!"

F. LEWIS.

A LETTER from Mrs. Belmont was the next morning put into Adela's hand. The well known superscription, the well known seal, the very fold of the letter (for every one has some peculiarity even in the merest trifles,) awakened a thousand tender emotions, and delightful associations, and she pressed the letter to her lips before she broke the seal. But the delight with which she began its perusal, gradually became a mixed feeling of joy and sorrow, as she found it breathed an anxious wish for her return.

"You have now my child," continued her mother's letter, "been gone above two months. How long that time has appeared to me you can little imagine. When I rise of a morning I look around me, but do not see my Adela. My walks, my books, have lost all their charms since I have not you to share them, and when the evening closes in, that time of calm converse, when I use to sit and spend a social hour with my child, and kiss and bless her ere we parted for the night, I am often weak enough to weep. Hasten then, my love, hasten to me. Return to the calm sweets of your peaceful home, the fond arms of your adoring

mother. Were you other than I know you to be, I should tremble lest discontent should be the companion of your return. But my Adela has a soul that can expatiate amid the rich scenes of nature, and draw from them, and her own mental resources pleasures far beyond what the world of fashion can offer her. She can prefer the pure affections of her mother's heart to the false homage of flatterers, and the pure communion with a higher nature, to the mere earthly round of fashionable existence."

Much more in the same strain the letter contained, and Adela's heart glowed with filial fondness, with filial gratitude. To behold her mother, to be clasped to her heart, would be a transport of delight that language could not paint! But oh! to leave Seeton Auber, perhaps for ever, was an agony equally beyond the power of expression. Yielding to her feelings she burst into tears; anticipations the most painful were accumulating on her imagination; in the petulance of grief she lamented her ever leaving Wales; in the despair of hopeless love she wished herself in the cold repose of the grave, the only place that seemed to promise peace to her beating heart.

In the midst of this paroxysm of emotion Lady Milsom entered her room. Her light step and lively look were instantly checked on beholding Adela's distress. Approaching her with the gentlest tenderness she inquired the cause of her tears, and taking her hand essayed to soothe her. The first impulse of Adela's heart was to confide to Lady Milsom the full extent of her sufferings, but a sense of shame withheld her, and smiling through her tears she put Mrs. Bel-

mont's letter into her ladyship's hand. As soon as she perceived its perusal was finished she cried—

"Do not deem me ungrateful or insensible. I love my mother with the deepest tenderness; but I have now other ties." She took Lady Milsom's hand, "and I should be ungrateful and insensible indeed if I could leave *them* without regret."

"My dear Adela," replied her ladyship, "I rejoice to find your tears have no bitterer source than sorrow at forsaking us; but we cannot resign you yet. I am unfortunately a stranger to Mrs. Belmont, but I will write to her, and urge your stay. The carriages are getting ready for an excursion to Dove Dale, therefore my love be speedy with your letter, as I shall be with mine, we may not have another opportunity before the post goes out." So saying the youthful bride hastily retreated to her dressing room, where the following letter was speedily penned, carefully sealed, and dispatched to the post:—

Milsom Park, August 31, 18——

"Madam,

"That my first letter should contain a petition shows my presumption, but it also evinces the conviction I have of your goodness. I find from a communication I had this morning from Miss Belmont, that you are desirous for her return, and so conscious do I feel of how great that desire must be, that was my own gratification merely concerned I should not have the courage to oppose it.

"The truth is, dear Madam, Miss Belmont has made a conquest of Lord Edward Elmer. He is a young

nobleman of real worth, and what will perhaps have less weight with you than the generality of mothers, of large and unincumbered fortune. He instantly applied himself to my lord to know to whom he was to look as the disposer of Miss Belmont's hand, and it was with some difficulty we prevented him paying you a post haste visit, to procure your sanction to his addresses: but as I am highly interested in his success, I have persuaded him to suffer me to negociate with you, while he prefers his suit with your Adela.

"You see I have taken much upon myself, but believe me madam your daughter has a true friend in me. If I am acting wrong pray let me hear from you immediately. The plan I have adopted will not endanger the object of your fond solicitude; if therefore you wish to give the subject consideration, a short delay would be of no material consequence. From the observations I have made, I can perceive Adela is not one to be caught by mere exterior graces. Lord Elmer (as is ever the case with merit) is too timid to make an immediate display of the real wealth of his mind and worth of his character. I design therefore to draw him forth, and show him as he really is, before I permit him to make advances, which might through ignorance of his estimable and hidden qualities meet a check, that might operate injuriously on the interest of both parties. If you enter into my views you will oblige me by making no allusion to the circumstance in your letters to Miss Belmont, but merely observe that you have acceded to my wish for her prolonged stay. I am writing in so much haste, that I scarcely know if I have made myself intelligible. Trusting

that the day is not far distant when I shall have the happiness of a personal knowledge of Mrs. Pelmont.

"I have the honour to be, &c. &c.

*Emilia Milsom.*"

A phaeton and four prancing greys drove rapidly up to the great entrance, as Mr. Auber returned from a walk, (for he had been among the few who had risen early after the revel of the preceding night,) Lord Elmer leaped out, and flew into the house without perceiving him, but returning immediately to give some directions to the servants, he *then* recognized him, they exchanged salutations, and entered the house together.

On reaching the saloon they found Lord Milsom, Frederic, and Mr. Chudleigh. The party was soon after augmented by the appearance of Miss Auber, Miss Melville, Lord Egremont, and the Earl of Errol, who had just left the breakfast room. One after another dropped in Lady Ruthven, Mrs. Saugrober, Miss Egremont, Mr. Finley, and Mr. Bolton.

At length Lord Edward becoming impatient, observed to Lord Milsom:—

"We are losing the beauty of the day!"

His lordship smiled and left the room in quest of his bride and Miss Belmont, with whom he soon returned. Resigning the latter to Lord Elmer, the company began to move to their carriages. The first that left the lodge was the young peer, bearing off in triumph our heroine and Lady Milsom. Mr. Auber was on duty in his attendance on his betrothed, but the *ennui* was a little relieved by the company of Miss

Melville and Oscar Finley. Chance so contrived it that most of the company were matched rather as they *ought*, than as they wished to be, for Lord Egremont found himself seated by Lady Ruthven, and Caroline narrowly escaped the companionship of Mr. Chudleigh. Seeing what awaited her she darted to the Egremonts' carriage, which had not yet driven away, and whispered something in Miss Melville's ear, who resigned her place to her. Many of the gentlemen of whom there was a superabundance went on horseback, which with servants formed rather a numerous cavalcade.

The romantic scenery through which they past, infused feelings of pleasure into most of the party. Lady Milsom was full of eloquent sweetness and drew out Lord Elmer by inquiries and observations, with a tact as admirable as it was well meant.

Adela appeared less brilliant and striking, than she ad done the night before when attired magnificently and surrounded by splendour; but to the eye of true taste infinitely more lovely. She looked more delicate, more ethereal, and yet full of intense and poetical feeling as she viewed the wonders, and the charms of nature, objects, which with whatever facility she might enter into the pleasures of dissipation, were those which truly touched her heart.

At Elmer House, a noble mansion, our heroine was introduced to the Dowager Lady Elmer; a lady perfectly of the old school, full of stately politeness, measured accents, and remarkable for her high notions and high heels.

After taking refreshment the party scattered; some in pursuit of one amusement, some of another. Two

or three of the gentlemen went to the Billiard room. A few of the ladies were led to the music room, while others, (among whom was Caroline,) preferred a ramble. Adela sat down to play chess with Lord Elmer, and Lady Milsom to look on, often exchanging looks of intelligence with her young and noble friend of which the fair chess player was little conscious. Adela played well, having had much practice from her childhood in playing with old Mr. Annesley, and after his decease occasionally with his son and her own mother. Lord Elmer was also reputed to possess no mean skill in this delightful and most superior game; but he certainly very little evinced it on the present occasion. He was perpetually making wrong moves, twirling his bishops as if they were knights, and giving his knights long diagonal marches as if they were bishops, putting his king in check, &c. &c. Lady Milsom was of great use in rectifying all these errors, but in spite of her kind intentions he ultimately experienced a *check mate:* which he might have regarded as prophetic of one he was destined to meet in a more important game.

Adela rose as soon as she gained the victory, and the lovely bride proposed adjourning to the music room, and tripping off she led the way, while Lord Elmer offered his arm to Miss Belmont and they followed. A gentleman whose back was towards them, was singing when they entered, and Adela fancied she was familiar with the voice. Seating herself on a couch by the side of Lady Milsom, while Edward took his place behind, she listened attentively to the following words:—

Funny and free
Is a bachelor's revery,
Cheerily, merrily passes his life,
Nothing knows he
Of connubial devilry,
Troublesome children and clamorous wife;
Free from satiety,
Care and anxiety,
Charms in variety fall to his share,
Bacchus's blisses,
And Venus's kisses,
This, my boys, this is the bachelor's fare.

A wife like a canister
Clattering, clattering,
Tied to a dog for his torment and dread,
All bespattering,
Bumping, battering,
Hurries and worries him till he is dead;
Old ones are two devils
Haunted with blue devils,
Young ones are new devils raising despair,
Doctors and nurses
Combining their curses,
Adieu to full purses and bachelor's fare.

Through such folly days,
Once sweet holidays,
Soon are embittered by wrangling strife;
Wives turn jolly days
To melancholy days,
All perplexing and vexing one's life.
Children are riotous,
Servant-maids fly at us,
Mothers to quiet us growl like a bear;
Polly is squalling,
And Molly is bawling,
While dad is recalling his bachelor's fare.

When they are older grown
Then they are bolder grown,
Turning your temper and spurning your rule;
Girls through foolishness,
Passion or mulishness,
Parry your wishes, and marry a fool.

Boys will anticipate,
Lavish, and dissipate
All that your busy pate hoarded with care;
Then tell me what jollity,
Fun and frivolity,
Equals in quality bachelor's fare?

"I wonder the ladies have not called you to order Noel!" cried Lord Elmer.

"I was not conscious of the presence of any," replied our friend Malcolm as he turned hastily round: for the few ladies who had visited the music room had left it again before Adela and Lady Milsom entered. The moment he recognized her ladyship and Miss Belmont he advanced to pay his compliments; and the easy and friendly manner with which he entered into conversation with them, began to discompose the harmony of Lord Elmer's temper, when a letter was delivered to him, on which he bowed and immediately withdrew. Lady Milsom not finding Adela inclined for music, asked her to walk, and Lord Elmer had the pleasure of being their escort.

"Of all the scenery you have viewed," asked Lady Milsom, as they wound through a romantic path on the margin of the Dove, "in the different countries you have visited, to which do you give the preference?"

"The present undoubtedly," said he.

"Yet it is not that nature has shed o'er the scene
The purest of crystal, and brightest of green,
'Tis not the soft magic of streamlet or hill,
Oh! no, it is *something* more exquisite still."

"Well, of all excepting this?" replied her ladyship smiling.

"The scenery of Switzerland," replied he. "Though

something may be owing to the circumstances under which I visited that romantic country. It was not as I afterwards travelled under the cold and petrifying authority of an old tutor, but in the society of my father, my brother, and that rattling fellow Harry Melville. I was besides scarcely fifteen, and it was the first time I had 'winged from view of the nest.'"

"You went on a visit to your aunt Lady Elphinstone," cried the young bride. "I was to have been of the party if Lady Elmer and your sisters had gone, and much disappointed was I at the alteration which took place in the original arrangements. Her ladyship still resides abroad?"

"Yes she has a sweet place between *Berne* and *Thun*. It is a rich pasture country, and you can conceive nothing more pleasurable than to see the peasantry at work in their pretty villages."

"The costume of the Swiss peasant is I believe very picturesque?" observed Adela.

"Completely so," replied the young peer, "it is in perfect keeping with the scenes by which they are surrounded."

"The Berne Alps are more beautiful than the Alps of Savoy?" resumed Miss Belmont.

"They are less stupendous and sublime, but the Alps of Berne are grouped more picturesquely, more beautifully. My aunt's *chateau* is not far from Thun Castle, the rapid waters of the Aar flow by it, and the prospect it commands beggars description. The snowy heights tinged with the celestial hues of heaven; beneath them some cliffs covered with trees of gigantic growth, others bare, jagged, and rugged, below them;

again, the neat town, rich vallies, and pure waters, form a picture too exquisite too magnificent for the imagination to reach. But I am running on—perhaps you have beheld the scenes and can feel the poverty of my description."

"Alas! only in fancy," Adela replied. "Would that it were my destiny to visit them and dear Florence. Who then would be so happy as I should be?"

"Those who accompanied you far more so," said he, "for—

"Oh how the best charms of nature improve,
When we see them reflected in looks that we love."

"Music is much cultivated in Switzerland I believe," rejoined Adela, diverting the conversation from herself.

"It very properly forms a part of the education even of the poorest, and humblest classes."

"Why very properly, my dear Lord Edward?" asked Lady Milsom.

"Because it furnishes them an amusement calculeted to refine and humanize their character. Relaxation is as necessary to the well-being of man as industry. It is a part of wisdom then to provide the poor with innoxious and easy means of amusement: as it tends to preserve them from debasing excesses. This is a point much neglected in England. What are the consequences? Grossness and brutality. The lower classes of this country make no approach to the refinement of mind, and courtesy of manners, that characterize the same class in France and Switzerland."

"You must attribute something to temperament," urged Lady Milsom.

"I beg your pardon, my dear Emilia, it is the result of a wrong system. Treat a man as a brute, and he becomes such. The distance between the high and low in England, is greater than in any other country I have visited. While the great are perhaps the most refined, enlightened and luxurious in the world; the low, I mean the most subordinate ranks, are the very reverse. Penal laws are enacted to correct their aberrations, but any effort to afford them innocent amusement is never thought of. The people left to themselves choose those which are most easily attained, or which their own debased imaginations suggest. The bow cannot be always bent. The sinews of toil must sometimes relax; they cease from labour, only to indulge in excess. While the poor of France and Switzerland are dancing, singing, and conversing, the poor of England are stupifying themselves in alehouses."

"I must confess," said Lady Milsom, "I sometimes blush for my country, and never more so than when I am in Paris. There all the exhibitions, so rich in the works of art, and the productions of nature, are open to the public. The poor and rich, the humble and the elevated, are equally at liberty to study and admire them, and never do you hear of a vulgar hand profaning or dispoiling one specimen of the wonders of the world, however much it may be above his power to estimate or comprehend it. No, the French appear to me to have an intuitive admiration of genius. To pay it deference, and attention, wherever and however they meet it."

"And how different is the picture of London!" cried Lord Elmer. One place, and one only is open

gratuitously to the public, the British Museum. Where are our public gardens? Why even that paltry place the Temple, is guarded with an a[illegible]ocratic suspicion, that excludes even those whose bearing bespeaks them of a better order."

The approach of Lord Milsom diverted the conversation into another channel, and the path becoming narrow, the young bride and bridegroom fell back to walk by themselves. As the scenery grew more bold and striking, Adela stopped to gaze upon it in speechless admiration, while her conductor detailed the local superstitions, the events that might have marked, or the natural circumstances that were either interesting or memorable in its diversified and picturesque objects.

The course of the Dove broken every now and then by waterfalls, as pellucid as light, at length brought them to that part of the Dale, where at a great height in the rocks a fine natural arch called *Reynard's Hole*, becomes visible. Lord Elmer again stopped to point it out with precision. Its form is a kind of sharply-pointed gothic, about forty feet in height and about eighteen in width. A steep and precipitous path leads to the cavern, and to those who will risk the danger and fatigue of the ascent, it presents a prospect grand and beautiful in the extreme.

As they stood contemplating the scene, they fancied they distinguished figures making way along the edge of the precipice, when the slow steps of Lord and Lady Milsom at length brought them up with her. Adela communicated to them her supposition that there were persons climbing the height. His lordship raised

his glass, which he had brought out with him for the sake of viewing distant objects, uttered an ejaculation of horror, and almost the next moment, a horse and his unfortunate rider were dashed to the bottom.

The rocks echoed the shrieks of Lady Milsom and Adela, while the gentlemen hastened to the assistance of the unfortunate. When they reached him, as they expected, he was scarce alive, being bruised and mangled dreadfully. They raised him with the gentlest care, and as they did so recognized Oscar Finley. He revived a little and then murmured, " Miss Auber— is she dead ?"

" Great Heaven !" exclaimed Lord Milsom, " Caroline has been the companion of this perilous adventure."

Lord Elmer resigning his charge solely to the care of his friend, hastened back to the ladies, whom he found pale, trembling, and hastening to the spot.

" Be composed," he cried, taking a hand of each, the sufferer lives, and is I trust not material injured."

" Who is it ?" inquired Lady Milsom in a voice of anguish. Is it any of our party ?"

" It is," replied his lordship, but doubtful how far either of the ladies might be interested in Mr. Finley, he said no more.

Adela would have sunk had he not caught her in his arms, for the apprehension that it was Seeton Auber seized her soul.

" Speak for Heaven's sake !" cried Lady Milsom. " It is not either of my cousins !"

" No, thank Heaven," he replied. " It is Mr. Finley." He immediately saw he had relieved their worst apprehensions; again repeating his assurances, and

leaving them to hasten to the unfortunate and Lord Milsom, he flew off to procure assistance.

The moment the ladies approached, Lord Milsom resigned Mr. Finley to their care, anxious to ascertain the fate of Caroline. For a moment he hesitated to leave them: but their courage was restored, as much as their compassion was awakened, and he felt there was nothing to apprehend.

The sinuosity of the Dale soon shut him from their view; and never were moments of greater agony, than those they passed watching the faint and suffering Finley. The approach of Lord Elmer, with several persons, among whom they soon distinguished Frederic and Lord Egremont, was relief to an agony that could not shed tears, but which flowed copiously, as the servants placed the unhappy Finley on a litter. Faint groans were the only evidence of life, and the procession moved along with countenances as mournful as if he was already dead, for few could entertain any hopes of his ultimate recovery. Adela leaned heavily on the arm of Frederic, she had been shaken by terrors the most fearful. Lord Egremont supported Lady Milsom, and Lord Edward walked by the side of the litter. In this manner they reached Elmer House, where they heard the horse that had fallen from the precipice had just arrived before them uninjured.

While Lord Elmer stayed to see Mr. Finley conveyed to bed, and dispatched a messenger for medical assistance, the rest of the party proceeded to the drawing-room, where Lady Elmer, Lady Ruthven,

and Mrs. Saugrober and her neice were seated, to whom they detailed the shocking occurrence.

"It was quite an Irish trick, however," cried Miss Egremont in a voice of little sympathy, "to attempt such an ascent on horseback."

"You are very right my dear," cried her aunt, "what could the silly young man expect?"

"Was he alone?" inquired Lady Ruthven.

"I think not," said Adela, 'for I am sure I discerned more than one figure on the precipice; but we were so terrified that we never thought of ascertaining."

"You still tremble my sweet Miss Belmont," cried Frederic, taking her hand.

"Indeed I do," she replied, withdrawing it; "and never, never, shall I think of this day without."

"If you are so delicate I wonder you could undertake to walk so far this morning; but I suppose some of the gentlemen promised to carry you."

The silly malice of this weak remark was in a measure unheard, as Lord Milsom at the moment entered. His lady flew to him exclaiming—

"My dear love what is the matter? you are pale. pale as death, and quite cold," continued she taking his hand.

Advancing to a sofa he threw himself on o it, and drew Lady Milsom to his side, then putting his hand to his forehead he cried—

"I have never been so shocked in my life! such an escape! nothing short of miraculous!"

"What do you mean, my love?" said his bride; "Mr. Finley's?"

"No, not Mr. Finley; who do you conceive was mad enough to mount behind him, in order to reach the cavern of ***Reynard's hole***?"

"Maria Melville, I'll be bound," exclaimed Miss Egremont, "its just like her."

"Caroline Auber!" replied his lordship. Frederic started on his feet, and clasped his hands. Adela and Emilia gasped but could not speak, while Miss Egremont first found words to ask what was become of her.

"Her escape," cried his lordship, "has been indeed providential. Her long hair got entangled in a bramble bush, which checked her descent, till a gentleman who happened to be on the height at the eminent peril of his life effected her rescue, and brought her safe down. The moment he had resigned her into other hands he fainted. This took place just as I reached them, and I assure you, at the moment I deemed them both dead. Some of Mrs. Stanhope's people came to their assistance, and thither Caroline has been conveyed, where she still lies in a state of insensibility."

"What is become of her noble delivererer?" impatiently asked Frederic.

"I left him with your father and brother, at Mrs. Stanhope's."

"Who is he, my lord?" asked Miss Egremont.

"Indeed I did not inquire. He spoke about my father as knowing him, but I did not distinctly hear what he said. He was talking to the captain, and Mr. Auber was speaking to me at the same moment."

"Is he quite recovered?" asked Lady Elmer.

"O! perfectly, but upon my soul, I never saw such a faint as his. The whole mass of his blood must have been turned by the peril of her situation. Poor Caroline!"

"Let us fly to her," cried Adela to Lady Milsom, now first breaking silence, and starting from her seat.

"Pardon me," cried his lordship, restraining them. "Her own woman is with her, and the doctor insists that no other person be suffered to approach her."

The friends again resumed their seats, and the conversation turned solely on the frightful adventure, till the ladies retired to dress for dinner.

Adela and Lady Milsom had little spirits for the task, though soothed by a favourable message as to the state of Caroline; they therefore made but a slight alteration in their appearance, and returned to the drawing-room, anxious to learn farther particulars.

As they entered they perceived a group of gentlemen at the further end of the room, in earnest conversation. Captain Auber was amongst them, and he hastened to Lady Milsom, whom he had not seen since the preceding night. Having kissed her cheek, and noticed Miss Belmont, he cried as he introduced a tall elegant young man to her ladyship—

"Behold Emilia the preserver of my child. Miss Belmont," he continued, "allow me to present to you one to whom I owe eternal gratitude."

Adela looked up and beheld Clarence! they mutually acknowledged the introduction in silence; but vain was every effort on either side to suppress the surprise and emotion occasioned by the sudden and unexpected recognition. Captain Auber was too much

agitated by recent circumstances, Lady Milsom too much interested in the inquiries she was making of her uncle, to take any notice of what passed. But there were two persons present who marked every glance of thought, every flush of emotion that had flitted across the countenance of either. These two were Mr. Auber and Lord Egremont. There is an appearance of an understanding between two persons known to each other, which must ever strike the watchful eye of scrutiny. The nature of that understanding is conjectured according to the mind that canvasses the subject. To Seeton recurred the circumstance of meeting his sister without Miss Belmont, after having seen them leave Russel Square together; the rumours that had reached his ear through Miss Egremont; the circumstance of the miniature, almost immediately after her arrival in town;—and in summing up, the whole ended in a conviction that Clarence was the man to whom her affections were pledged, and Malcolm, whom he had formerly suspected, and whom he had just discovered was Clarence's friend, had only acted as a confident between them. The wild enthusiasm of Seeton's passion had received a check from the open and warm expostulation he had undergone from Frederic, who in revealing to his brother the state of his heart, had at once warned him of the danger, and showed him the impropriety of his cherishing a fruitless passion. The appearance of Clarence operated as a *coup de grace*. He determined to rouse the energies of his character, and act the part that became him. To fly to other scenes had he only selfishly considered himself, would have been his plan; but in

so doing, he should, (after the marked attention which in the blindness of passion he had paid her,) leave Adela exposed to animadversion, and awaken injurious conjectures. Besides, she was unprotected, beautiful and unguarded; how many were the snares to which she was exposed! If he loved her, what, he asked himself, should be his aim to make her happy? He knew Frederic's impetuosity: his presence might avert some of its consequences. Perhaps there were obstacles to her union with the chosen of her heart; it might be in his power to remove them. "To be her friend—to seek her happiness at the expence of my own! have I so much virtue, so much heroism—I know not. I will at least make the effort." Feeling he should not be able to swallow a morsel of dinner, he quitted the house, and plunging into the wildest scene of solitude, that the neighbourhood afforded him, he yielded himself up to reflection and to plan the line of conduct it was in future his duty to pursue.

Lord Egremont's observations had produced the same results as to the supposition that Clarence was the secret and favoured lover of Miss Belmont. To discover every thing relating to him was his first aim, and then he should best be able to judge of the methods he should adopt for removing him. Of winning the affections of his intended victim he now despaired; she was evidently averse to him. Stratagem and violence were his only means of obtaining her: by the first he must entrap her from her friends, by the last he must preclude the possibility of her return to them. He now therefore determined to resign those attentions, which, without gaining on her, exposed him to

the wrath of Lady Ruthven; and as a cat oocs with a mouse, he looked one way, while all his designs were directed another.

## CHAPTER XXI.

"Exiles, the proverb says, subsist on hope.
Delusive hope still points to distant good,
To good that mocks approach." FRANCIS.

"Some faults, though small, intolerable grow." DRYDEN.

THE circumstances which led Clarence into Derbyshire are easily detailed. The advertisement Malcolm inserted in the The Times, met the eye of the Earl of E rol. He wrote to Clarence, and pleased with his manners and address, as well as satisfied of the sufficiency of his powers, he engaged him as his private secretary. But the Earl not requiring his services immediately, Clarence forbore to make mention in his letters to Caroline of his engagement, fearful from the waywardness of his fate that something might intervene, and then she would unnecessarily be a sharer in his disappointment. He however wrote in excel lent spirits, which created a correspondent gaiety in

her; and that bouyancy and happiness induced the rashness which led to the fatal accident.

A few days previous to that circumstance the Earl wrote to Clarence to come down to Milsom Park; as he had discovered some old manuscripts in his son's library he wished him to collate. This summons was of course attended to with all possible dispatch, and not finding the Earl at the Park, he was informed by the porter he was probably at Lord Elmer's. But his lordship had in fact gone to Chalsworth. Again disappointed, Clarence thought it fruitless and unnecessary to seek his noble patron any further, and feeling his time his own began to explore the country. The striking and romantic scenery of Dove Dale attracted his imagination, and learning how magnificent the view the precipice commanded, he scaled it just in time to save the life of Caroline. The effort of raising her from the ledge of the rock, and disentangling her hair from the bramble that had caught it, required almost super-human strength and courage. Had he lost his balance, had the giddy height dazzled his eye or shaken his nerves, they had both been lost. But more than life was at stake, and after efforts that may be conceived, not described, he bore her down the path. From the moment the horse fell, her senses had forsaken her; she had no consciousness of her rescue or of her rescuer, and when Clarence resigned her into the hands of those whom chance brought to his aid, he just heard them exclaim, "She lives! she breathes!" when exhausted nature failed, and he sunk apparently lifeless on the earth, in a faint so terrific that it was imagined that the dews of death were on his brow. It

was nothing however but the effect of high wrought terror, a revulsion of feeling; and though a deadly paleness sat on his face the remainder of the day, he appeared not otherwise to suffer from the event.

Captain Auber, who be his faults what they may, had a great share of paternal affection, and more especially for his daughter, in the first gush of his feelings overwhelmed Clarence with the expressions of his gratitude, expressions which were not weakened when on the Earl's arrival he perceived the estimation he was held in by that venerable nobleman.

Could Clarence have divested himself of apprehension, how brilliant were the prospects which suddenly opened upon him. As he felt his hand clasped by the father, brothers, and other noble relatives of his mistress, a hope such as he had never felt before broke like

"The first blush of the sun-gilded air"

upon his mind. He contrasted his state on landing in Great Britain, with the footing on which he at present stood. Then an outcast, alike resourceless and unknown; now in the very bosom of *her* family, bound to them by the ties of gratitude, and estimated and valued as his talent and education merited. But oh! he secretly exclaimed, as these thoughts past rapidly through his mind, "How soon may this bright prospect be blasted, and the eye, that could cheer me in misery and destitution, close for ever and leave me benighted in the midst of honour and of fortune."

On entering the breakfast room the following morning Clarence found our heroine alone. They had mutually desired an opportunity of speaking, and that had

probably been the inducement for their leaving their rooms at so early an hour. If such had been their wish it was realized, for not a member of the family was a-stir but themselves.

She rose as he entered, and resigned the book she had been reading. There was a something in the easy friendliness of her air, which confirmed a suspicion that had glanced into his mind the day before at the moment she entered the drawing-room with Lady Milsom, and after the first salutations were over he cried with a tone of suppressed emotion—

"Will you pardon the inquiry Madam if I ask, was the desire of sitting for your picture the sole motive that led you to the Strand? Had you no previous knowledge of the being you found there? And was not the aid you there afforded me a tribute to my necessity rather than to my talent?

Adela coloured and felt at a loss how to reply.

"I see madam how it is, and the same generosity which then brought you to my relief, would now induce you to shun the acknowledgments of my gratitude."

"It is vain to attempt a concealment, which I could not support, and for which I do not see the necessity. Your thanks Sir, are not due to me, I was but an agent."

"There is but one in the world who would take such an interest in my fate," cried he with emotion. "Yet not less is my gratitude due to you Madam, for undertaking such an office—in stepping from your elevated sphere, to assist in succouring an outcast and an unfortunate. I must conclude that my story is

known to you." And a flush that borrowed some of its crimson from pride, mantled on his cheek.

"I hope you do not regret the partial confidence that has been reposed in me? And allow me to rectify a mistake into which you seem to have fallen. I am no high-born daughter of wealth and power. It was therefore no descent; I met you rather on the broad level of similar fortunes, similar obscurity."

Clarence felt the delicacy which induced her to wound her own feelings to spare his.

"Since then Madam, you share the confidence of one who has met in you a sister-spirit; since she has imparted to your breast some share of the interest she takes in my fate, may I trust, dare I hope that pity for me will induce you to be the medium of sentiments I dare convey by no unsafe channel, and give me details I dare not exact from others?"

There was an imploring urgency in his look and voice that touched Adela's heart, and she replied—

"You may rest assured that my best services are yours. Clarence bowed: then taking a small parcel from his pocket he would have presented it to her, but at the moment Mr. Auber entered, with the air of one who evidently expected to find the room empty. He changed colour on beholding Clarence; but commanding his feelings he bowed to Adela, and advancing to her companion, whom he endeavoured to think of only as the preserver of his sister, he shook his hand.

"This is not the conduct of people who have only met for the first time yesterday," thought Seeton. "My conjectures are borne out." and he would have taken

an opportunity to leave the room, as he saw he had interrupted them, but others of the family entered.

"Has any one seen Mr. Finley?" inquired the captain.

"I have," replied Seeton. "I have only just quitted him."

"And what is your opinion dear Seeton?" cried Lady Milsom.

"That his state is a precarious one: but he has youth in his favour."

The breakfast past heavily, every one being out of spirits and full of fears as to the ultimate fate of the sufferers. The majority of the party had returned to Milsom Park, where Lady Ruthven had consented to do the honors, till such time as Miss Auber's state would admit of the family leaving her vicinity; till then Lord Elmer had insisted on their considering his house as their own.

For three days Caroline lay in a state of insensibility, and as her senses gradually returned, so excessive was her weakness that the utmost caution was necessary as to those who were permitted to approach her. She was still ignorant as to whom she owed her preservation; and Adela who had not been admitted till the patient asked for her, saw it would be long before she could venture to make such a communication. Instituting herselfas chief nurse, she nowseldom quitted the invalid's room, while Lady Milsom, and Mrs. Stanhope who had so hospitably opened her doors to the sufferer, and who was an amiable and elegant woman, shared in the duties of the office.

After the first shock of the accident was past, the

gentlemen whose politics it had disarranged, began secretly and selfishly to murmur at the loss of Miss Belmont. In her short and occasional visits to Elmer House, she permitted no one to engross her for a moment excepting Clarence. She could not refuse to his agonized inquiries the details that would soothe and dissipate his terrors. By that singular fatality which sometimes takes place, Mr. Auber was generally the witness of these confidential communications, and they left him without a doubt as to the truth of his conjectures; and as he recalled Adela's conduct to him he could not acquit her of the charge of coquetry. His manner, although he had not designed it, became changed; and by the natural chain of cause and effect so did our heroine's. Hurt by his serious and cold politeness, his studied reserve, she became spiritless and abstracted; and it was not long ere her melancholy attracted remark. Lady Milsom thought it attributable to anxiety and watching, and urged her to return to Matlock for a short time for change of scene. The same idea struck the captain, and he joined in the entreaty. He was much touched by Adela's attachment to his daughter, and having been made acquainted with Lord Elmer's design of laying his title and fortune at her feet, he already began to feel towards her the respect and deference due to the wife of a peer of the realm. He did not for a moment doubt, that his lordship would be accepted, and he rejoiced that Lord Egremont had withdrawn himself, and he trusted given up all his designs; while the remembrance of the countenance he had given them created some unpleasant qualms.

Mr. Auber thought her melancholy the result of "hope deferred," and endeavoured to rouse himself to that energy which would bring things to a crisis, consummate *her* happiness, and seal *his own* despair. In this state he hung wavering and irresolute, waiting for events, which he had not the courage to accelerate. Much of his time was spent at Matlock, as he felt what was due to Miss Egremont, and she was not wanting contrivances to detain him.

In the mean time Frederic was in a state of restlessness that he could ill endure. The manner in which his sister had flattered his hopes, aided by the consciousness of his own pretensions, had created in his mind a certainty of ultimate success which no circumstances, no appearances could entirely baffle. Her coldness and reserve he sometimes attributed to her retired education; but when again he recollected the much greater favour his brother had been viewed with, he was staggered; yet he solaced himself with thinking of the caprices of the sex, and that Seeton might be regarded almost as a married man, and he knew the ladies allowed a latitude to them which was not accorded to bachelors.

In this state matters continued nearly three weeks, in which time Mr. Finley gave symptoms of recovery, but still with very very distant prospects of convalescence, while at the expiration of that time Caroline was able to descend to Mrs. Stanhope's little drawing room, and for a few hours in the day enjoy the society of her family. It was now that Adela began to contemplate, revealing the circumstances which she at once feared and desired to divulge. When an allusion

had been first made to the event, the remembrance of the horror she had experienced when the horse first lost his footing so overcame her that she fainted away, after which all reference to the subject had been so much avoided, and every one who approached her had been so guarded in their conversation, that Clarence had never been mentioned. But Adela now saw that her increasing convalescence would soon lead to a removal; of which the natural consequence must be her meeting her lover. Such a meeting, if she was not prepared for it, might not only endanger her health, but lead to fatal discoveries. She therefore snatched the first opportunity that offered to lead to the subject. She began by speaking of Mr. Finley, from whom the current of remark naturally flowed to herself, who had been the companion of the rash enterprise. Her miraculous preservation induced a mention of her preserver; she was left to guess who it might be, who she would have wished it to be, till gradually the whole truth broke upon her. Her emotion was great, but tears came to her relief, and she listened with interest to the detail of all that had occurred regarding Clarence since his arrival in Derbyshire, and heard with pleasure the situation he held under the aged Earl of Errol.

To see Clarence was now her utmost wish, and to see him unrestrained by the presence of any of her family. Adela promised to do her utmost to contrive the interview. Caroline pressed her hand in silent gratitude, and then addressed to Clarence a few lines, the first she had written since the event.

On the morning of this disclosure to Caroline, her

brother Frederic had come to the determination of ending the suspense under which he painfully existed, by endeavouring to obtain an interview with the source of all his disquietude. The necessity of attending a summons from the Horse Guards, which would detain him some time in town, added to his natural impatience, tended to urge matters to a crisis.

"Where are you going Frederic?" asked his father as he prepared to quit the breakfast room.

"To Mrs. Stanhope's," was the reply.

"Oh! there will be plenty of time for your taking leave of your sister between this and to-morrow morning. Come with me to the library, there are matters I wish to consult you upon."

"But my dear Sir," replied he impatiently, "cannot they wait. Do they concern me?"

"Yes Sir," cried his father with some displeasure, and passing him he led the way to the library.

When they were seated how great was the young man's mortification to find, the subject to be discussed was Mr. Bolton's pretensions to his sister's hand, a subject on which he had recently spoken more fully to the captain. Frederic would have cut the matter short at once, by disclosing the share he had in it, when the captain checked him, and entered rather diffusely on the topic.

The large sum in which he stood indebted to Mr. Bolton senior, the interest they possessed with the Egremonts, and their great wealth, were all circumstances that weighed heavily against any procedure that might irritate or offend the wooer; but on the other hand the captain could not, had he even been

able to reckon on the obedience of his daughter, endure the idea of sacrificing her to a man of low origin, and vulgar manners. The captain therefore began to lay out some of the schemes of his temporizing and crooked policy, in which he contemplated requiring his son's aid, when Frederic again endeavoured to fly off in a tangent. But his flight was once more arrested, and he saw with horror his father draw forth a budget of bills, and begin, like a chancellor of the exchequer, to prose upon ways and means. As many of the long ill-looking papers, were accounts to which his extravagance had added many an item, he was obliged to listen with what patience he could, and when at last he effected his escape, it was with an aching head, and a deadened intellect. Darting down stairs to regain some of his accustomed clearness and intelligence in the open air, he was met by Lord Elmer, who turned back, took his arm, and insisted on dragging him to the stables to look at some horses he had lately purchased. Yielding with heroic acquiescence to the fate that pursued him, he attended his lordship to his stud, when he heard his brother's voice informing some one that he was going to Mrs. Stanhope's; but that his return would be speedy. Knowing that in the humble though elegant habitation of the young widow there was no library, no boudoir to which he could lead Miss Belmont, and that he could only depend for a private interview with her on his sister's taking Mrs. Stanhope from the small drawing-room, which he knew a look from him would be sufficient to make her do, he lounged about with his young host for half an hour, and then repaired to the precincts of the

dwelling that contained the object of his devotion, to watch his brother's exit. At length he had the satisfaction to see him depart, and in a few minutes he rapped at the door, hoping as he did so, that as his sister was allowed few visitors he should find the ladies alone. The door was opened, and he was on the point of stepping in, when he received a violent slap on the back, and turning suddenly to ascertain to whom he was so indebted, he beheld Bolton with a broad grin on his face preparing to follow him. Never was he in a temper less fitted to endure pleasantry of this kind; previously irritated by the obstructions that had been thrown in his path, this acted as a *coup de grace*, and turning furiously on the intruder, he with one blow felled him to the ground.

Surprise at the demoniac look of rage that had glared upon him, when Frederic turned about, had half done the work of the blow; and he was struck dumb as well as prostrate; but a moment's consideration convinced him that he was much hurt, and that it was very proper he should cry out; therefore instead of endeavouring to recover his footing he commenced a loud and continued bellow. A noise so great and so unusual created a general consternation. The people ran out of the neighbouring houses, and Mrs. Stanhope and her servants flew to the door.

"What a detestable beast!" exclaimed Frederic furiously, just as Mrs. Stanhope catching his arm and drawing him aside whispered with earnestness, "My dear sir, for Heaven's sake what is the cause of this? You will terrify your sister to death."

The consciousness of what he had done and how it

might affect the invalid, now first flashed upon his mind, and he felt inclined to immolate Bolton as the cause of all, who still continued his dismal roarings as he was raised and assisted into the house.

"Heavens! do you hear the awful noise he's making?" ejaculated Frederic, as he felt that nothing but smiting the foe to his peace, could appease his rage. Mrs. Stanhope though distressed at the whole affair, could scarcely preserve her gravity, while she entreated the assailant to depart, and leave her to soothe and quiet the victim of his fury; at length she succeeded, Frederic retired and she returned to the house.

On entering the parlour, she beheld Mr. Bolton blubbering over a bason of water in which he was washing his face, while her servant acting under his direction, was soaking stripes of brown paper in vinegar, with which he afterwards intersected his face in every direction, and then patted them with his handkerchief to make them adhere. This process was continually interrupted by bitter lamentations over the brutality with which he had been treated, and appeals to Mrs. Stanhope's compassion.

Caroline in the meantime having been informed of all the circumstances of the case, determined to venture down stairs, to offer some apology for the outrage her brother had committed, and to endeavour to soothe the feelings of one, whose errors were those of ignorance, not of ill-nature, and therefore did not deserve such severity of treatment. Full of these kind intentions, she reached the parlour leaning on the arm of her maid. The door was thrown open, but alas!

"Good-natured soul, all unadvised"

of what she had to see, the moment her eyes rested on the visage of Mr. Bolton, her gravity forsook her, and there was no alternative but making a precipitate retreat.

To form some excuse for this apparent want of humanity, it must be necessary to conceive the citizen as he appeared, and to remember that Caroline was wholly unprepared for such an exhibition.

"His lank and scanty hair was black,
His visage sallow, and his back
As broad and strong as Plato's.
His grey eye on his face so wan,
Looked like an oyster spilt upon
A dish of mash'd potatoes."

His nose had experienced considerable enlargement, and the corners of his capacious mouth were drawn down in the true lines of dolorous distress, while the continual application of his handkerchief to his eyes, the perpetual rolling of his unwieldly bulk, which kept time to the moaning of his husky voice, completed the picture.

Caroline had much levity of temper, but she was not deficient in good feelings, and by the time she had regained the drawing-rom, and her risibility had in a degree subsided, she severely blamed herself for not having had more self-command.

Mrs. Stanhope, who was standing opposite Bolton at the moment of Miss Auber's *entrée* and exit, was placed in a most trying situation. Nothing is more infectious than laughing, even when there is no apparent cause for it, but, with Bolton before her eyes, and the suppressed burst of Caroline's voice, and the quick

tread of Caroline's step on her ear, to preserve her composure was an effort that taxed her muscles to the utmost, and induced her to bite her lips till they almost bled.

All this did not escape its object, who like Scrub in the Beau Stratagem, was very apt to suspect all laughing had some reference to himself; on the present occasion he could have little doubt on the subject, and his rage began to kindle.

"Well!" he at length exclaimed as he endeavoured to parry the choking effects of passion, "I thought any one would say this was hard usage; but it seems its all a joke to every one of you. There's Miss Caroline, she's as pleased as if her brother had given me so many cakes and comfits, instead of kicks and cuffs. Never mind, she may laugh at the other side of her face soon. Gad! if I don't think that there's not one of you here that would mind murdering me!" And seizing his hat and repelling all attempts to conciliate him, he precipately left the house.

A walk of about a mile, under the influence of a powerful sun was not calculated to cool Mr. Bolton, yet nevertheless by the time he reached Lord Elmer's library, his rage had subsided into the calm of settled purpose—the resolution of revenge rather than the acrimony of invective, in fact the determination of his soul was to recal the offer he had made Miss Auber; and full of this intention he had sought the library, where he was informed her father was.

That gentleman was busily engaged in writing letters, so that he did not immediately look up on Bolton's entrance; but when he did he dropped the pen from

his hand, adjusted his spectacles, took them off, and seemed to doubt the evidence of his eyes and their auxiliaries, as he gazed on the spectacle before him; at length he exclaimed—

"In the name of wonder, Mr. Bolton, what is the matter with you?"

"Why I've been nearly assassinated—that's all!" replied he with affected calmness, as he attempted to regulate the brown paper patches, which had become somewhat disarranged in the course of his walk.

"Good Heavens!" uttered the Captain, all amazement, "who can have attacked you in this desperate manner? and in the broad day too!"

"O! if it had been night I should have been done for!" and he shook his big head in unison with his despairing tones as he thought how narrowly he had escaped death; then after a momentary pause, he resumed with a grin of a malicious irony—

"You've *nice* children Captain, *uncommonly* nice children."

"What do you mean, sir," cried the Captain somewhat offended by his manner.

"I mean, sir," cried Bolton, raising his voice and relapsing into all his original vulgarity, "that this slaughtering work is Mr. Firelock's. Aye sir, that son of a cannon Mr. Frederic. He knocked me down; traversed my body up and down, right and left; stood a quarter of an hour on my nose, and I believe wanted to march down my throat."

"I am all amazement!" cried the Captain. "Are you speaking of my son Frederic?"

"Yes, the raging firebrand! God help the coun-

try with a standing army of such ! Well Sir, at last I was picked up in the mangled condition you see, and carried into Mrs. Stanhope's. All this time mind ye, I didn't utter a sound for fear of disturbing Miss Caroline. Well I was covering my bruises, as you see, with brown paper, wetted with vinegar, and dabbing them thus with my handkerchief, when Mrs. Stanhope came in, who by the by had got Mr. Blood-and-thunder off, and for which to be sure I was much obliged to her. Well Sir, instead of coming up to me in that coaxing way that females have when there's any thing a matter with you, she goes right slap up to the window, and never as much as said, are you dead or alive. Well Sir, stay awhile," he continued as he saw the Captain inclined to speak ; "presently the door opens, and who should I clap my eyes upon but Miss Caroline ! at last thinks I here's somebody that 'll pity me, and I looked most *pathetically* at her, when all of a sudden, she gives herself a twist, and took herself off, laughing enough to dislocate her bones. Now I hope you call this elegance and humanity ?"

"I cannot comprehend a word you have said," cried the Captain, "It appears to me a miracle !"

"Then I'm the miracle; for it's a miracle I'm alive," cried Bolton.

"But if Frederic has done all this," rejoined his father, "he must have received some provocation. What did you do to offend him ? What was it enraged him ?"

"That's not for me to know !" rejoined the injured man, "I looked into the same house—to be sure I didn't ask his leave, and perhaps he don't allow that."

"Come Sir," said the Captain out of patience, "there is somewhat too much of this."

"I think so," cried Bolton drily, "so I mean to have no more of it. As I have no wish to be laughed at by my wife, and battered by her brother, whenever the fiery fit takes them, and perhaps give Mr. Firelock nephews and neices to assist him on such pleasant diverting occasions, I beg you'll think no more about what I have said about Miss Caroline. I prefer carrying my fortune into a family where I shall have my life spared to enjoy it; and where, if I *do* happen to look the same way with one of the family I mayn't be beat to a mummy for it."

That Mr. Bolton should resign his pretensions to Miss Auber, gave the Captain any thing but displeasure; but that it should be in consequence of conduct so flagrant as that gentleman described, gave him some uneasiness, and his tone softened as he said—

"My good Mr. Bolton, if Frederic is the transgressor, which from your account it seems he is, I shall insist on his making you every reparation in his power by begging your pardon: and with regard to Miss Auber, believe me you must have been entirely mistaken. Remember her family, her breeding," expostulated the Captain.

"I shall remember *both* for the remainder of my life. Don't pretend to tell me, Sir; I saw her quaking as she left the room, and I had not been quaking so long under her brother's heels, but that I knew it when I saw it. But this isn't the first joke I've had of hers, by many. I wonder she didn't drag me up the rock instead of that poor Mr. Finley, for the mere

pleasure of seeing me tumble down. And as for making Mr. Frederic beg my pardon, pray don't think of it. My reparation shall be repairing somewhere else, and never presenting myself before that pounder again."

"I see my son coming," cried the Captain advancing to the window, "now I shall have every thing explained."

"Then pray let me get out of the way, for perhaps he mayn't like the way I have patched my bruis . Where, where can I go? Isn't there a back staircase? I would not meet Mr. Fire-and-tow for the world! half as much again would kill me."

Looking around, he espied another door opposite to that at which he expected to see Frederic enter. Hurrying through it, with an agility perfectly unusual, and turning at the same time to ascertain the fact as to whether his enemy was approaching, he made a false step, the consequence of which was a precipitate descent to the bottom of a flight of stairs. Bouncing with tremendous force against a door, it flew open, and presented him to the astonished eyes of Lady Elmer,

> "Squat as the figure of a bonze
> Upon a Chinese drawing."

## CHAPTER XXII.

"Not faster in the summer's ray,
The spring's frail beauties fade away,
Than anguish and decay consume
The smiling virgin's rosy bloom.
Some beauty's snatch'd each day, each hour;
For beauty is a fleeting flower;
Then how can wisdom e'er confide
In beauty's momentary pride." ELPHINSTON.

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CLARENCE was now almost entirely confined to Milsom Park, and little opportunity of a meeting between him and Caroline presented itself. Caroline therefore, as the only prospect of privately seeing him, expressed a wish to return to Matlock. Her desire was no sooner expressed than acceded to, and she once more found herself in the stately mansion of her cousin, beneath the same roof with Clarence.

"Adela," cried she, as she reposed on a couch in her dressing room, "I must see him before I meet him in the presence of my family. I will plead continued indisposition, nor enter the saloon till that is accomplished. To suppress my feelings at our first meeting would be an effort too great, too deep; and were my strength equal to it, I fear I should evince too much, in spite of every effort.

Our heroine listened to her without making any reply, she was absorbed in anxieties of her own. Her return to Matlock had found it a different place to what it had been on her first arrival. All was now changed, since Seeton Auber was no longer the same. He neither sought nor made opportunities to see and to converse with her, nay he even avoided those which presented themselves; yet he hovered about, as if involuntarily, and there frequently discovered her in circumstances, which, however innocent in themselves, had a suspicious appearance. Thus he sometimes found her in conversation with Clarence, which from its subject of course instantly ceased on the approach of a third person, he also saw her give to and receive letters from him, and suffer snatched and whispering intimations which no person, but one under peculiar circumstances, would be privileged to address to her.

Seeton Auber believed himself incapable of acting the mean part of a spy on any ones actions, but he was in fact doing no other with regard to Adela. Viewing every thing as he did, through the medium of passion and prejudice, he imparted to every circumstance, the colours that tinctured his own mind: and in the transactions of a few days he imagined he saw the approaching event which was to tear Adela for ever from his eyes.

Frederic on his return from Mrs. Stanhope's on the day of his assault upon poor Bolton, had sought his father, and found him angry and bewildered at the event of the morning. All was however forgotten, all absorbed in the astounding intelligence that burst upon him, in the disclosure that his son made of his

passion for Miss Belmont, and his intentions of making his pretensions known, and having them recognized before he left Derbashire, let the consequences be what they might.

It were tedious to enter on the detail of the Captain's dismay and distraction, his expostulation, entreaties, and threats; or Frederic's obstinacy and warmth, his extenuation, resolves and defiance; suffice it to say that the library was a scene of violence and commotion when Lord Milsom entered. His character and the relation in which he stood to the parties, at once led them to open to him the state of affairs; and he listened with equal complacency to the worldly minded Captain, and the headstrong Ensign of the Guards. As the best means of bringing them to reason, he calmed the fears of the first by assuring him, of the perfect conviction he felt that Miss Belmont would enter into no engagement that wanted the sanction of parental authority; and he lowered the pride and haughty bearing of the latter, by questioning his chance of success; and reminding him that he was not the only one who admired Miss Belmont, nor might he be the one who found most favor in her eyes. None but Lord Milsom could have dared to take such dangerous ground; none other could have uttered such a sentiment with impunity; but his lordship's situation precluded the fears of jealousy, as his manner averted the effects of anger. Frederic reddened, but his colour gradually subsided, and his spirit also. Imagining he had sufficiently prepared him for such a communication, he mentioned that he had just had a conversation with Lord and Lady Elmer, in which that

young nobleman had made his mother acquainted with his intention of addressing Miss Belmont, and added his lordship :—

'My Emelia, who is highly interested in his cause assures me that the young lady seems much struck with Lord Edward's graces und virtues. All comparisons are odious, and I wish to draw no parallel between Frederic and my noble friend; both are I believe equally dear to me. But I cannot but remind Mr. Auber, that Lord Elmer can make such a choice without incurring the charge of imprudence, or precipitancy, *he* has attained manhood, and has an ample fortune—"

"While *I* am still in my boyhood and have no fortune," cried Frederic impetuously, "that is the inference of your lordship's speech."

"'Tis even so," replied his cousin, "and to those who can view the subject dispassionately, the conclusions to which it leads are equally obvious. The lady is portionless, she is formed for the sphere of refined society, but

> "Lips, though blooming, must still be fed,
> And not e'en love can live on flowers."

In that sphere Lord Elmer can not only place, but preserve her; and therefore—"

"He is the most deserving of her," interrupted Frederic, "with ill-disguised rage!"

"The most suited to her," replied his lordship calmly, "and certainly, putting rank and fortune out of the question, were I impartially to decide between you, he is equally worthy of her as yourself: the odds therefore are his."

"That is not for your lordship to decide," said Frederic proudly as he quitted the room, and left his father and cousin to conclude the conference.

Young Auber's mind was now in a ferment of various and contending passions, the necessity for his departure was imperative; but he would see Adela before he went, and more than all, he would see and have an explanation with Lord Elmer. This night must wind up the ball, and as he rushed down the stairs he might have exclaimed with Richard—

——"I have set my life upon a cast,
And I will stand the hazard of the die."

Crossing the hall, he observed a post chaise at the door, as if some one was on the eve of departure, and a confused something, in which Lord Elmer was mentioned, met his ear. That his rival was departing that he might elude him, that he might not be going *alone*, flashed like successive gleams of lurid lightning on his brain, and with the wildness of frenzy he darted to the post chaise.

But there sat the harmless Bolton and his bruises, ready and *willing* to take his departure for Threadneedle Street. The moment he saw Frederic, whom he believed possessed with the devil, and who looked as if he came to finish the work of destruction he had begun, he sunk to the bottom of the chaise with a single ejaculation of "O Lord!" but uttered with a depth of feeling, that plainly evinced he was giving up the ghost by anticipation. He could scarcely believe the evidence of the feeble senses that fear had left him, when he saw Frederic, whom he imagined had

come to slay him, walk rapidly away, and re-enter the house.

"Oh! he's gone for a poker, or something. I shall be murdered at last," he exclaimed. Then screaming to the servants, he entreated them to use dispatch, and in a short time he had the felicity of flying from Elmer House as fast as four horses could carry him.

Six o'clock came, and the dinner bell sounded; every one assembled, but Lord Elmer and Frederic. Lady Elmer would not wait.

"They will be here with the second course, perhaps," cried she.

Captain Auber and Lord Milsom exchanged looks. The second course appeared, but not the gentlemen; dinner concluded, the dessert and coffee succeeded, but still came no tidings, and

"The day had closed in dim showers,"

when a groom mounted on a horse covered with foam, rode rapidly into the court-yard, and throwing himself from his panting steed, delivered letters which he desired might be immediately given to Captain Auber and Lord Milsom.

The former trembled as he broke the seal, and his eyes grew dim; Lord Milsom saw his emotion, and guessed too well the fatal import of the letters. To avoid exciting observation, he suggested their retiring to the library. As soon as they entered, the captain handed the letter he had just perused to his nephew; and throwing himself into a chair, leaned his head upon his hand, while his elbow rested on the library table.

Frederick's letter ran thus:—

"Perhaps there is no folly my rashness could commit that you, my dear Sir, would be surprised at. I will therefore hope the situation in which I now stand will the less affect you. Lord Elmer and I have had a meeting. He is wounded and is at W———, under the care of Mr. Stratton and Mr. Braymore. You must break this to Lady Elmer. I shall instantly depart for Paris; Sir Charles Linden, who attended me on the fatal occasion, accompanies me.

One word more, though it maddens me to look that way. All my hopes in one quarter are vanished, I leave her for ever. The secret machinations of my rival have undone me, and if he survives he will reap the harvest of his treachery. She like myself has been the victim of deception; she is too unpractised to discern the arts by which she has been won. May she be happy.

You will inform Seeton and Caroline of my situation when and as you think proper.

"Your unfortunate Son,

"*Frederic Auber.*"

His letter to Lord Milsom was still more intemperate, accusing his lordship of being the abettor of Lord Elmer's cold-blooded schemes. Yet he entreated him to hasten to his friend who lay at a place about five and twenty miles distant, dangerously wounded. He also begged he would soothe his father, and take every precaution as to how the story reached his sister. And as he should be anxious to know his

rival's state, he hoped his cousin would write till he was out of danger, directing his letters, *Post restante Calais*, till he heard from him again.

The flood of thought that burst upon the captain's mind was overpowering, and rising from his seat in the bitterness of his soul, he cursed the rash tempers of his children. In what dilemmas had they not involved themselves and others within a few days! Not content with treading the wild acclivities of danger with desperate temerity themselves, they must drag others along with them, and thus ingulph all connected with them in common ruin.

"Truly my lord," cried the unhappy father, "I feel as if I were the guilty cause of all, instead of the passive endurer of the miseries my children heap upon me. How shall I bear to meet Lady Elmer? What is the return her hospitality has met? First her house has been turned into an hospital for invalids, and the wretched Mr. Finley will not soon be in a state to quit it, if ever. Next i has been disturbed by the intemperate violence inflicted on Mr. Bolton, who has absolutely flown her peaceful house in bodily fear. My words of sorrow and apology are yet warm upon her ear in palliation of these outrages, and here is a letter," snatching the one to himself from the table where Lord Milsom had thrown it, "here is a letter," he continued, grinding his teeth, "which bids me tell her that the heir of the honours of her house, her only son, has fallen, has been dragged to the scene of blood by mine!" And the captain clasped his hands and paced the room with the air of one distracted.

Lord Milsom used every argument to soothe him,

and proposed seeing Lady Elmer himself; but the recollection that the unfortunate young nobleman would demand his immediate attention, determined him to delegate the task to another, and ringing the bell, he bade the servant inform Mr. Auber that he wished to see him.

"What!" ejaculated the distressed captain as the servant closed the door—"what will be the consequence of this rashness to his own interests—even if Lord Elmer survives!" and he continued pacing the room.

He stopped as his son entered, who, shocked at the haggard expression of his countenance, exclaimed, "Great Heaven! my dearest Sir what has occurred? What is the meaning of all this?"

The only reply he received was having his brother's letters put into his hand. He ran them over with haste and apprehension, and then throwing them from him uttered an ejaculation of sorrow and surprise.

Captain Auber and Lord Milsom were not more convinced that Lord Elmer was the favoured lover of Miss Belmont, than Seeton that he was *not:* the concern of all parties for what had occurred was equally great, though arising from different views of the subject. Lord Milsom and the Captain lamented, (setting aside every other consideration,) that the happiness of the young pair should be thus endangered and interrupted. The former lost all resentful feeling against Adela, in the consideration of her sufferings, and the probable loss of such a prospect of elevation. While Seeton sorrowed to think, that had the duellists really known as he did the state of her affections, how much

they might have spared themselves the charge of guilty folly, and their friends the pains of grief and anxiety.

It was ultimately determined to keep the matter as much hushed as possible; Seeton engaged to see Lady Elmer, and place matters in the best light; Lord Milsom, whom the Captain insisted on accompanying, ordered his carriage, to attend the wounded peer. And thus every thing was so arranged that Adela and Caroline returned to Matlock ignorant of the circumstance of the duel.

While Lord Elmer lingered under the effects of his wound, and Frederic winged his way to France, the unconscious cause of all was giving herself up to the absorbing influence of love. She even sought the society of Miss Egremont, since it promised to place her in the vicinity of Seeton Auber, smiled on Lord Egremont, clung to Lady Ruthven, and endured the tedious Mrs. Saugrober:—

> "What will not woman do who loves!
> What means will she refuse to keep that heart
> Where all her joys are placed!"

The vain, the weak, the malicious Miss Egremont, the designing, base, and shallow man her father, the prosing, dull, and pompous widow her aunt, with the heartless, though talented Lady Ruthven, were a circle from which she would have flown with disgust and contempt, but that within it she beheld him, whose voice was to her the music of the spheres, whose smile was the sunshine of her existence.

Many departures had taken place, and the inhabitants of Milsom park were almost reduced to a family

party. This circumstance drew them more closely and more frequently into union, and Caroline had not been many days from Dove Dale before Lady Milsom began to urge her to make one of the family circle.

"Come," she cried one evening, "I should imagine you would be impatient to see your preserver, believe me he deserves your gratitude; let me promise that you will appear at dinner to-morrow. In truth Caroline, I know not when you will be yourself again."

"Nor I neither," cried she, putting her hand to her head to hide the emotion which the mention of Clarence had excited.

"Will you take a stroll through the garden with me?" asked Lady Milsom.

It was a beautiful September evening, and as her cousin led her to the window, Caroline inhaled the sweet breath of the shrubs and flowers, which seemed to invite her forth. Tying on her hat and mantle, she put her arm in her cousin's, and they wandered into the garden. There is often a sweet communion between minds, which is felt rather than expressed, and such was the calm and almost melancholy tone of feeling that pervaded the lovely cousins: neither spoke; Emilia felt by a kind of intuition that her companion was not inclined for talking, and Caroline yielding to a thousand thoughts and anticipations did not perceive whither she was led, till she found herself on the steps of a little pavilion, which arose in picturesque beauty in one of the loveliest spots in the garden.

"You are fatigued Caroline," said her sweet conductor, "Let us go in, and rest."

On entering the little fanciful retreat, she foun.

every thing prepared for an elegant entertainment, though on a small scale. Fruits and flowers, music, pictures, all that could please the eye and charm the fancy, was assembled with delicate taste.

"We will have a Roman supper Caroline," said Lady Milsom, disengaging her cousin from her hat and mantle, and seating her on a couch. At that moment our heroine entered, and called her ladyship away, and Caroline was left alone. It was a rich and glowing sunset, and the scene was like the green Elysium into which *Æneas* entered. All was beautiful and calm, and the social few that were to assemble were there already by anticipation, as Caroline looked around her. But they passed rapidly through her fancy, and as her mind rested on one whom she did not doubt would be among their number, thoughts full of fond recollections rose upon her mind. She was seated on a low couch, her white arm sustaining her head; whilst the rich glow of the sinking sun, which penetrated the light drapery of a window nearly opposite gleamed upon the thousand beautiful labyrinths in which her dark tresses interwove themselves, and on the white muslin robe which gave her form no other ornament than grace and simplicity.

As she sat she had been a study for a painter, what did she not appear to Clarence, (who had entered unperceived, and stood contemplating her in silent rapture and admiration,) to him whose passion was the concentrated devotion of despairing idolatry. A door, distant from that by which she had entered, stood open, his step had made no sound as he advanced, and the silence of the apartment he approached, led him

to believe it was unoccupied. He entered—he beheld her—a momentary suspension of breath left him without power to move or speak. There she sat, beautiful as when she rose in dreams upon his fancy; unconscious of his presence, yet perhaps thinking of him—he had but to put forth his hand to pluck the fruit, but that hand had not the power to move. At length a sigh, which burst like a rescued prisoner from his breast, made Caroline look up—but the lower end of the apartment was enveloped in gloom, and she could merely distinguish that a figure was approaching, but not whom. She rose, the next moment he was at her feet.

In a measure prepared to meet him that evening, but a little surprise blended with great emotion, would have precipitated her on the floor, had not her lover started on his feet, and received her in his arms. As she recovered, she felt the beating of the heart to which she was pressed, and when her eloquent eyes looked up to meet those that were beaming upon her, she did not make an effort to disengage herself. Clarence felt the wordless confession, and dwelling for a moment on the humid sweetness of her melting eyes, he for the first time pressed her lips, and thus without a sound being uttered, was the declaration and acknowledgment of their mutual love recognized and registered.

The silence around them, the si[illegible]genial to that silence, the elegance of th[illegible] not distinctly observed, all those auxiliaries na[illegible] effect in bosoms of taste and sentiment,) the light yet confiding pressure of her sweet form upon his bosom;

her respiration almost breathing on his lips, as he gazed on her face touched with the delicacy incident to illness, and where passion kindled under the veil of sweet confusion, all held him in a trance too exquisite for description. It flits before the efforts of language to embody it, like those beautiful sun-lined clouds, which vary into a thousand hues of celestial beauty, ere the painter can fix a tint.

"Leave me, Clarence!" at length exclaimed his mistress, "leave me, that I may regain some composure ere my family surround me." Again he pressed her to his glowing heart, and then running down the steps of the pavilion, flew into the garden; while Caroline sunk on the couch, and yielded to a flood of tears, warm, wild, delicious.

But she was not long left to the indulgence of the sweet feelings that overpowered her. Lights were kindling, steps approaching, voices sounding, and she endeavoured to compose herself, and prepare for the part she was to act—the necessity of meeting Clarence as a stranger.

"I owe you many apologies, dear Caroline," cried her lovely cousin, as she returned alone into the pavilion: "first for bringing you here before the preparations were completed, and secondly for leaving you alone. The orders were not given till late, as the idea only struck me as I rose from dinner, so the servants are not to blame; though I might wish, I cannot expect to find them magicians. Unfortunately, there are no magic wands in the world now. For the next charge—"

"Pray dear Emilia," interrupted Caroline, conscious

how much she was indebted to those very circumstances for which her cousin was apologizing, "spare yourself all this trouble of explanation, and allow me an opportunity of thanking you for your kind thought, and delightful arrangements. Who will be of our little party?"

"Very few. I have selected those I thought you would like, or rather I have detained them, for our neighbour, Sir Benjamin Benfield, gives an entertainment to-night; therefore, though I did not expect to draw many away from him, yet lest, in an unwary fit of friendship, some that I did not wish might remain, I only whispered about my pavilion party to the dear few I was desirous of drawing round us."

"And who may those be?" inquired Caroline.

"Miss Belmont of course, your gallant preserver, his friend Mr. Noel, your brother Seeton, Mr. Chudleigh, the Earl of Errol, and perhaps mamma."

"Then my father, Sir Hubert, Frederic, and Lord Elmer, are all at Sir Benjamin's; and Lord Milsom too! how is it that you are become such a fashionable pair already?"

"Sir Hubert is particularly engaged to Sir Benjamin, they are very old friends, you know; all the others you have named are at Elmer House. My lord has been much there for some days, but I had a note from him, excusing himself from dinner, but promising to be home this evening, so we may possibly have his company; but he says not a word of the other gentlemen."

"What are they all about?" asked Caroline.

"Indeed I assure you I am almost as full of cu-

riosity as Blue Beard's lady," answered her ladyship, smiling, "and am even worse off for means of information. *Mais voila mon père!*" she exclaimed, as the Earl of Errol entered with Adela, and followed by Mr. Chudleigh.

Caroline immediately drew our heroine to her side on the couch, apprehensive of the latter gentleman assuming the place; and having given to his inquiries and congratulations the attention that courtesy demanded, entered into conversation with the Earl, while the kind Lady Milsom devoted herself to Mr. Chudleigh, whose pleasure at beholding Caroline had been succeeded by chagrin and grief, from the coldness with which she met him.

Some time after, Mr. Auber appeared arm in arm with Clarence. How interesting, how delightful to Caroline's eyes, to view him on such terms with her brother! Her heart palpitated to suffocation as they approached; and though not unpractised in hiding her feelings, a burning blush kindled on her cheek in spite of every effort.

Adela, who could well understand her feelings, looked at her, and actually coloured in sympathy, as Clarence was presented; but the crimson mantled even to her brow, as she looked up, and met the eye of Seeton fixed on her with intense earnestness.

She immediately became unconscious of all that was passing round her. She heard voices, but they conveyed no meaning to her mind, nor did she again dare to lift her eyes, full of consciousness and confusion as she felt they were, till her embarassment was relieved by the company moving to the supper room.

In vain I try with livelier air
  To wake the breathing string,
The voice of other times is there,
  And saddens all I sing."

Lowering his voice as he exclusively addressed Caroline, he added, with a sigh, "Do you remember the duets you used to sing with Emma?"

"Oh! how well!" replied Caroline, as the remembrance of her young and lovely friend, past like a fair and smiling vision before her imagination. "I will prove to you that I do, by attempting one of her favourite songs, if Lady Melsom will play the accompaniment?"

"Oh! most willingly;" cried that lady, delighted to find her effort to draw her friends out, likely to prove successful; and delicately touching the instrument, Caroline began—

"'Twas sad to leave thy shore
  Sweet island of my birth,
For thou to me art more
  Than any spot on earth.
And shall I ever tread again
  Thy green and flow'ry vales,
And seek, and ah! not seek in vain,
  Sweet health from thy free gales?
Come balmy breath of Britain,
  And fan my fainting brow,
Come balmy breath of Britain,
  And call me homeward now.

How light along thy meads
  My childish footsteps strayed
Though ebbing time recedes,
  Thy image shall not fade:
Still green in memory borne,
  Though far away I rove,
To thee, to thee I turn
  My home of early love.

Come balmy breath of Britain,
And fan my fainting brow,
Come balmy breath of Britain,
And call me homeward now."

The melody and the memories attached to it, were the chief charms of this little canzonet, which Caroline sung with sweetness and feeling, while a tear to the gentle Emma glistened in her eye. She thought of her at all times with tender regret, but attuned as her feelings now were to sweet and soft emotion, those reminiscencies were accompanied with a more than ordinary sensation. Emma became the subject of conversation. Lady Milsom, Seeton Auber, and the Earl had all known and loved her, and Mr. Chudleigh heard them join Caroline in eulogizing her virtues with pride and pleasure.

"Our house at Nice," cried Caroline, particularly addressing lady Milsom, "was about half a mile from the sea, in a delightful and sequested spot quite out of the town. I can recal Emma as she used to sit with me in the balcony of the drawing-room and enjoy the charming prospect, the surrounding mountains, many of them topped with snow, and every object tinged with sunbeams, the groves and orange gardens with the white and scattered habitations. I have some of her sketches: you have seen them Adela," addressing our heroine.

"Yes," she replied, "they are all pretty, but I chiefly admire those in which she introduces a view of the Mediterranean."

"What a sea!" exclaimed Clarence with the admiration of an enthusiast, "so blue, so transparent. My

happiest recollections revert to the period when I used to sit or wander on its shore."

A blush half pleasure, half confusion, flitted across Caroline's cheek as he spoke, and which she strove to conceal by shading her eyes with her hand.

"I too, can revert to Nice with feelings of no com mon interest," cried Mr. Chudleigh, "though I only arrived in time to attend Emma's funeral; but I had reckoned so long and with so much certainty on that termination to her sufferings, that after the first shook the news of her death gave me, I cannot say I grieved. I felt that she was removed to the only place she was fitted for; and I would suffer no murmuring spirit to arise. Nevertheless I could not entirely shake off the gloom it had cast over me, and to dissipate it I made frequent journeys, sometimes accompanied by my mother, sometimes alone. On one of my solitary rambles I met with a singular adventure, one which I recur to with pleasure, since I regard myself as the means of saving the life of a fellow creature.

After I had been travelling some days, I reached *Pont du Gard*, put up at a little inn, and retired at an early hour. But the first sweet sleep, so refreshing to to the weary traveller, had scarcely come over me, before I was roused by the most alarming noises, mixed with cries and shrieks. I rose with the utmost dispatch, and looking from the window of *mon petit auberge*, I soon perceived there was a dreadful fire. I thought I might be of some use at all events; and the grand and awful view of a vast conflagration, is a

sight I would never lose. I hastened to the scene; all was confusion and dismay. The flames were spreading rapidly under the influence of a stirring breeze, and illuminated the rapid waters of the *Gard*. Every countenance exhibited wild and varied expressions of horror, anxiety, awe, and curiosity, for the red light made every object visible. The skies, which had a few hours before been a deep bright blue, were now one vast vault of crimson. I stood in wondering admiration one moment, to pause upon the scene, ere I mingled in the crowd; when a young man rushed past me with the rapidity of light. I gazed after him and saw him take a direction opposite to the scene of alarm. My first idea that he was rushing to the preservation of some friend was of course dissipated; suddenly I saw him seized by two of the military, he struggled; I was hastening toward him, but ere I approached he had by despesate efforts escaped their grasp. All past in less time than I take to relate it. The young fugitive and his pursuers presented a picture I shall not soon forgot, though I could not distinctly mark their countenances. He was young and agile, full of graceful energy and picturesque beauty, though in the tattered habit of a peasant. His head was uncovered, a circumstance that marked him out to me even at a distance. The assailers were elder men, one of them tall and meagre, the other thickset, and robust; and after the tallest had measured his length on the ground, this sturdy little fellow, gave my interesting unknown some trouble. At length he freed himself and darted forward with the swiftness of the deer, pursued by the little soldier. I followed, and regardless of whether I

was doing right or wrong, arrested the progress of the man of arms, in order to facilitate the fugitive's escape. I was rewarded by a volley of oaths, and we were on the point of coming to a more serious *rencontre*, when a rush of the crowd, who were retreating from a new burst of the flames, separated us. I saw no more of my military friend, or him whom he pursued; and I soon forgot both in active exertions on behalf of the sufferers in the conflagration."

During this recital, Caroline stole a glance at Clarence, and marked the deep interest and varying colour his countenance displayed.

"The custom in France of sounding all the bells," resumed Mr. Chudleigh, "in cases of conflagration, adds considerable solemnity and interest to the scene; these mixing with the weeping and shrieks of the women and children the prayers and exclamations uttered by the men, formed a tumult I shall never cease to remember. The day was advancing ere I quitted the scene; where the subdued fire was still but a slumbering enemy, who might awake at some unexpected moment with new fury, and having refreshed myself with a change of dress, and ordered my servant to be in readiness for my departure, in the course of a couple of hours I set off for Avignon. As I was travelling for pleasure, I deviated as the road invited me, and thus I was about entering a wood that lay to my left, when judge my horror at beholding a man apparently lifeless lying on the road. I dismounted, and calling to my servant, hastened to the unfortunate, to ascertain whether he was alive or dead—"

"You found him dead!" ejaculated Clarence in a tone of horror.

"No sir!" replied Mr. Chudleigh, "but I found him badly wounded. We carefully conveyed him to the nearest habitation, where every necessary service was rendered him, and he recovered sufficiently to inform me, that the state in which I found him was the effect of a desperate rencontre with a deserter, who had effected his escape, and whom he had accidentally met as he was coming through the wood. From his description, I had no doubt but he was the very man whose escape I had been the means of facilitating. He gave me a most terrible account of him, but I traced in it a great deal of the bitterness of enmity, and therefore did not suffer myself to regret the good turn I had done the unfortunate, any more than the succour I had rendered his foe."

As this recital proceeded, Caroline was agonized with the apprehension that Clarence would betray himself, for though she had never heard his history regularly or minutely, she knew enough of it to see how deeply he was interested in the adventures Mr. Chudleigh was recounting. Vainly, however, did she watch to catch her lover's eye, in order to give him an admonitory glance; all his attention was devoted to his rival's narrative, in whom he so unexpectedly discovered, not merely a benefactor, as far as regarded his escape, but the being also who preserved him from having Le Gaut's life to answer for. Every one is flattered by attention, and that which arises from other feelings, self-love is often apt to attribute to the striking nature of the circumstances recorded, and the

power and ability with which they are detailed. This supposition, together with the knowledge of the French habits of animated gesture and expression, prevented Mr. Chudleigh feeling any surprise at the excess of interest with which Clarence listened to him, and pleased in proportion as he imagined he imparted pleasure he continued his narrative.—

"So impatient was my new friend of the delay which might effectually prevent the retaking of the deserter, that he got me to write to those he had left at *Pont du Gard*, and my servant was entrusted with the dispatches. I then endeavoured to persuade Le Gant (that was the wounded man's name) to compose himself to rest; and as the noon was advanced, I set him the example. The combined effects of heat, fatigue, and agitation, threw me into a sleep of many hours duration, and when I awoke, I found my new friend had insisted on being removed, and had departed *sans ceremonie*, too polite, I suppose, to rouse me out of my afternoon nap to wish me good by."

"But you heard from him afterwards, I suppose," cried Lady Milsom; "in common gratitude that was to be expected."

"I never heard more of him," replied Mr. Chudleigh, "though I made inquiries on my return; however, as he had interested me but little, that was of no consequence. I had done my duty, and the satisfaction attendant on that consciousness, is always a sufficient reward; but I was by no means so indifferent about the deserter, in whom I felt singularly interested; all my efforts were however unavailing, I could gain no clue of him; perhaps my motives of

inquiry were mistaken, and supposing me actuated by hostile intentions, some who might have been able to direct me, were perhaps deterred from giving information, for I have reason to think I was at times hard upon the fugitive."

"Then you are unaware as to what was his ultimate destiny," said Mr. Auber, "whether he escaped or was taken."

"Entirely; but" continued Mr. Chudleigh, "though you will probably smile at the notice of such a thing, I have been most singularly and continually visited by him in dreams. If I was given to superstition, I should say he was destined to cross my path some way or other."

"And you *do* think so, Chudleigh," resumed Seeton, "in spite of your philosophy. Superstition is a part of our nature, a weakness to which we have an inherent tendency, and which is strengthened and nurtured by those cabalistic sybils, our nurses."

"And in after life, a thousand things arise to increase, at least to confirm it," observed the earl: "the unfortunate I have always found prone to superstition."

"Because they are always anxious to refer the events of their lives to causes independent of themselves," said Mr. Chudleigh, "and thus avoid the odium and self-reproach attached to misconduct. Our love of the marvellous, also, is another loop-hole for superstition."

"And how many are the writers in all countries, that feed and nourish that depraved appetite," said Mr. Noel, "by the most eccentric and romantic productions."

"No country is more prolific of such works than your own, Mr. Noel," observed Caroline, "a course of reading fra' north of the Tweed, would make me superstitious to my heart's content."

"I hope there is not so much mischief in it as you would infer," said Adela, smiling, "or I am lost. The manners and customs of a people tinged with a spirit of superstition and romance, are more interesting to me than any other. I am never happier than when surrounded by witches, and warlocks, and elfin sprites."

"Then you are of course an admirer of Sir Walter Scott," cried Noel.

"Undoubtedly;" she replied.

"Your admiration," resumed Malcolm, "were he aware of it, would compensate for all that cold critics have vented against him."

"Oh! I do not deem him a writer to stand the severe and regular ordeal of the critic;" said Adela, animating with the subject, "he must not be judged by rule and compass. His productions are very unequal, they are deformed by numerous faults, but there is a sparkling *spirit* that runs through them, that suffuses them, which to those who *can* feel it, possesses an indescribable charm. It is like the light in a landscape, which beautifies even barrenness; it is like the effect complexion and expression produce in a countenance otherwise plain; it is in fact what I can vividly feel, but vainly attempt to describe."

"I perfectly enter into it;" replied Seeton Auber, catching the tone of Adela's feelings. "The characteristics of a country will always be found in its poetry.

To this national influence much of the beauty of Sir Walter's may be traced. Well versed in the early and interesting history of Scottish *auld lang syne*, he has caught and embodied the high spirit of the people of former days,—the proud and noble daring of the cheftain—the enthusiasm, the devotedness of confederate clans. Amid the deep glens—the dark ravines—the mountains and mountain-torrents of his native clime, he caught feelings and ideas which are the constituents of poetry: it is therefore but fair since his country has done so much for him, that he should do something for his country."

"The Lady of the Lake, is my favourite of all his poems," cried Lady Milsom. "Ellen is a character so sweetly simple, I cannot believe there is any one in the world stoic enough not to admire her. The story is not darkened by his usual obscurity, and the *denuement* is gratifying and interesting. But I never admired Marmion."

"Oh! it is a striking poem," cried Adela, "abounding in fine descriptions. What can be more beautiful than these lines as the knell is heard for Constance:—

"Slow o'er the midnight wave it swung,
Northumbrian rocks in answer rung;
To Wentworth cell the echoes roll'd,—
His beads the wakeful hermit told;—
So far was heard the mighty knell,
The stag sprung up on Cheviot fell,
Spread his broad nostrils to the wind,
Then couched him down beside his hind,
And quaked amid the mountain fern,
To hear that sound so dull and stern."

Since they had quitted Wales, Seeton had scarcely seen Adela engaged with so much earnestness as

delight on any subject of literature, as this evening, and it forcibly recalled some of the happy and charming hours he had spent in Belmont Cottage. Her varied and sweet annunciation, her animated and beautiful expression as she delivered the lines from Marmion, had never struck him with more vivid admiration.

Not less delighted was Caroline that the conversation had diverged into another channel than that into which Mr. Chudleigh had thrown it, and as much for the sake of keeping on its present current, as from the pleasure she should derive from it, she requested Adela to repeat those lines from Scott which were so much admired by her mother.

The softness of filial love, full of the sweetest recollections, immediately rose in her countenance, and with a voice of touching sweetness she complied, unembarrassed by the admiring eyes that were bent upon her, for her thoughts and her heart were at that moment in Wales. She had so often heard her mother breathe the lines, that every word she uttered recalled some look, some tone, which was registered in her memory; and as Caroline listened to her she could almost have fancied Mrs. Belmont was speaking:—

"When musing on companions gone,
We doubly feel ourselves alone,
Something, my friend, we yet may gain—
There is a pleasure in the pain;
It soothes the love of lonely rest
Deep in each gentler heart imprest,
'Tis silent amid worldly toils
And stifled soon by mental broils;
But in a bosom thus prepared,
Its still small voice is often heard,

Whispering a mingled sentiment,
'Twixt resignation and content.
Oft in my mind such thoughts awake
By lone St. Mary's silent lake;
Thou knowest it well—nor fen, nor sedge,
Pollute the pure lake's crystal edge;
Abrupt and sheer the mountains sink
At once upon the level brink;
And just a trace of silver sand
Marks where the water meets the land.
Far in the mirror bright and blue,
Each hill's huge outline you may view,
Shaggy with heath, and lone and bare,
Nor tree nor bush, nor brake is there,
Save where of land yon slender line
Bears thwart the lake the scattered pine.
Yet e'en this nakedness has power,
And aids the feeling of the hour;
Nor thicket, copse, nor dell ye spy,
Where living thing concealed might lie,
Nor point retiring hides a dell
Where swain or woodman, lone may dwell;
There's nothing left to fancy's guess;
You see that all is loneliness;
And silence aids, though the steep hills
Send to the lake a thousand rills.
In summer tide so soft they weep,
The sound but lulls the ear to sleep.
Nought living meets the eye or ear,
But well I ween the dead is near;
For though in feudal strife a foe
Has laid our lady's chapel low,
Yet still beneath the hallowed soil,
The peasant rests him from his toil,
And dying, bids his bones be laid,
Where erst his simple fathers prayed.
If age had tamed the passion's strife
And fate had cut my ties to life,
Here have I thought 'twas sweet to dwell,
And rear again the chaplain's cell;
Like that same peaceful hermitage,
Where Milton longed to spend his age.*

When she had concluded the lines, she rose and went to the window, to hide the tears that had gathered in her eyes. Some feelings of self-reproach for the lengthened period of her absence mingled with her home recollections. Drawing aside the curtain she looked upon the moon-lit garden, and saw the bright waters of the Derwent glancing in the distance, and her native scenes recurred to her in all their vividness and beauty.

"I think I can guess the source of that sigh," cried Seeton Auber, as he followed her to the window. "Your thoughts are, where I was most happy, in your sweet home, and with your lovely mother."

Adela looked up with her wet lashes, and her smiling, tearful eye, with an expression of such pensive sweetness that he forgot every thing but that he loved her, and taking her hand, he continued—

"How dear to me will ever be the memory of those days, when you accorded me the privileges of a friend and brother, and the dull formalities of the world's etiquette was unknown to our little social circle. How sweet to me were

"Those garden rambles in the silent night,
Those trees so shady, and that moon so bright;
That thickset alley by the arbour closed,
That woodbine seat where we at last reposed;
And then the hopes that came, and then were gone,
Quick as the clouds beneath the moon past on."

Adela bent her head to hide her blushes. A feeling of delight thrilled her heart, at Seeton's sudden return of attention and gallantry, after a coldness so marked and so prolonged. Confused with the unexpectedness of his address, she did not sufficiently recollect herself

to withdraw her hand till she felt it pressed as he added—

"Would that I were there again and for ever—

'Where simply to feel that we breathe, that we live,
Is worth the best joys that life elsewhere can give.'

"We are much indebted to the poets this evening," cried she, moving from the window. "We have borrowed largely from them."

"Not without acknowledgment, however," replied Seeton, following her," and you pay back by the new charms with which you invest them, any beauty they may have lent you. Scott does not yet know how tuneful a poet he is, since he has never heard his verses from your lips."

Resuming her seat, near which Seeton drew his, Adela found the party engaged on the question of the Scotch novels, and Noel was drawing parallels between them and Sir Walter's poems, to prove the author of both was one and the same person.

"Take Rokeby, and the Pirate for instance, and you identify the writer throughout," continued he; "in the notes to the former you find all the raw materials for the latter."

Just then the entrance of Lady Auber, Sir Hubert, and Lord Milsom terminated the argument, and gave a new turn to the discourse. In the course of an hour after the party broke up, and returned to the house. Seeton had offered his arm to Adela, and such was the mutual enchantment they felt in each other's society, that they did not perceive that the circuit they had taken, and the slow pace at which they moved, had left them the sole tenants of the garden.

To have breathed into her ear the passion that animated his heart had been the first impulse of a soul less restrained by the dictates of duty, and of principle; for again the apprehension of a rival in her affections, had flitted before the eloquent language of her eyes. She had received his attentions with a delight so vivid; her spirits, her beauty had kindled to such sparkling animation from the moment he approached her with his former air of admiration and devotedness, that it was impossible to believe he was an object of indifference to her. Who then was Clarence, what was the tie that held them on so confidential and familiar a footing? And eager to penetrate the mystery, and feeling less sore on the subject than he had hitherto done, he turned the conversation that way. He was startled to find Adela shunned the subject; but as he who has once attempted to cross a ford, will endeavour to gain the opposite side, however difficult he may find the passage, he continued to press the matter. Adela became embarrassed and confused, and again a train of fears and conjectures bewildered and distressed his mind. The accidental resemblance that Caroline had noticed now gave room for speculation. He was a foreigner, so was Mrs. Belmont; might there not be some link of unacknowledged relationship. Willing to ascertain this point, after some general remarks on the good opinion Clarence every where conciliated, he asked, what was the estimation he was held in by Mrs. Belmont?

"She does not know him," replied Adela.

"Not know him!" he repeated with surprise. "You just now told me in answer to my inquiry if he



*Her reverie was interrupted by the identical Person who formed the subject of their conversation*

had ever been in Wales, that he had very recently; and I now remember in the course of this evening Mr. Noel made some allusions to their meeting there; therefore—"

This remark was suddenly interrupted by the approach of the identical person who formed the subject of his inquiry. Caroline, impatient to unbosom herself to Adela, had expressed a wish to see her as she quitted the drawing room; Clarence catching at the sound, asked if he should seek her; his mistress bowed her acquiescence, and thus commissioned he flew into the garden.

The expression with which he had just parted from Miss Auber was still glowing in his countenance, and regarding Adela's as he did with admiration, gratitude, and confidence, there was a something in his manner that Seeton's son could neither brook nor understand. The moment he discovered that he came for the sole purpose of seeking our heroine, Mr. Auber resigned her, bowed distantly, and coldly, and turned back into the garden, while Adela, scarcely knowing what she did, took the offered arm of Clarence, and proceeded to the house.

## CHAPTER XXIII.

> " Absence—is not the soul lorn by it
> From more than light, than life and breath,
> 'Tis Lethe's gloom, but not its quiet,
> The pain without the peace of death."
>
> CAMPBELL.

THE circumstance of the duel, and Frederic's departure for France, was necessarily disclosed in a short time, and excited various feelings of regret, sorrow, and uneasiness, as the parties to whom it was made known was variously interested.

Adela expressed so lively a concern in the fate of Lord Elmer, and made such frequent inquiries as to the progress of his recovery, that Lady Milsom and her lord flattered themselves, with the most happy termination of their young friend's hopes. It is difficult to distinguish between incipient love, and the kind interest and admiration which so amiable a being as Lord Edward is calculated to excite, especially under such circumstances. Besides people are always particularly ready to fancy such indications, even where there is not a shadow of their existence. Thus it became thoroughly established in the minds of Captain Auber, the Earl of Errol, Lord and Lady Milsom, and some few others, that Adela would at no very distant day be Lady Elmer; and it induced new motives of interest, attention, and affection from all of

them, towards her: while she, happy in the possession of such friends, neither analyzed nor imagined the motives of their actions.

Mrs. Belmont, deceived by Lady Milsom's letters, indulged the same delusion, and petitioned Heaven for the happiness of her child. The sweet mistress at Milsom Park had urged her to join their party, but accustomed to habits of seclusion, she was strongly averse to again mixing with the world. She had other motives also; her daughter's letters had named some individuals whom she had formerly known, either personally, or by report, and these she had no wish to encounter again, and endure the shock of revived and painful recollection. She therefore politely but firmly declined Lady Milsom's invitation, but at the same time acceded Adela to her without limit or restriction.

In truth Mrs. Belmont could not but rejoice at the prospect that had opened for her child, who was, she proudly felt, fitted to embellish the most exalted station; and her maternal anxieties were infinitely allayed, when she considered the dear object of her tender solicitude under the protecting friendship of such women as Lady Auber, Lady Milsom, and Caroline; and surrounded by society to which a hope of introducing her had never glanced into her mind. Often as Adela advanced to womanhood, had she looked around and wondered who would be the possessor of the affections of her young and ardent heart, of her enriched and enthusiastic mind; and she had seen none, but the placid Mr. Annesley, to whom she could bear the idea of confiding her. Little did she imagine when she first beheld the Captain and his daughter, what were

the events of interest and importance to which that intimacy would lead. Little did she calculate that they were so soon to transplant her child from the simple and secluded scenes in which she had been bred, to become the magnet of attraction in the brilliant and polished circles of fashion. It was a transition she neither dreamed of nor desired; believing as she did that peace and safety best sorted with retirement: but a superior power had ordered it otherwise, and she yielded to the current the fortune of her child seemed taking. It had not been sought, it was the effect of chance, perhaps, still better, of a superintending Providence, and confiding in that she trusted to behold the happiest events.

It may be laid down as a position that there is little hazard of seeing controverted, that religion is the first grand essential in life, the ultimatum of human happiness. "Philosophy readily triumphs over past or future evil, but present evil triumphs over philosophy." Not so with religion, it is an impregnable fortress, which "present-evil" assails in vain, and in which, if some of the arrows of calamity reach us, we readily obtain a balsam which mitigates the anguish of the wound. This had been the solace and experience of Mrs. Belmont throughout an eventful life, a life pregnant with sorrow and calamity. It had taught her a patient acquiescence in the decrees of fate, a trust that whatever happened was for the best, was for some good purpose that she could not penetrate, but which she did not suffer herself to doubt would in due time be brought to bear.

This happy disposition of mind, was neither the

gift of nature, nor the sudden result of misfortune or reason. It was the work of time acting upon a mind finely organized to judge wisely, and a temper willing to receive the chastisement of calamity as the necessary probation to virtue.

In religion she found a sweet a peaceful sanctuary, in which she sought the repose suited to her years, without any of the austerities of a bigot or a sectarian. So little of parade was there in her devotion, that it was necessary to know her long and intimately to become acquainted with the strictness with which she performed her religious duties, and the pure piety that animated her mind.

Religion is the strong hold of humanity; but it is not to be rushed into at the moment of emergency, by every weary or worried fugitive on the road of life: those who have neglected the duties and virtues with which it is garrisoned, cannot expect to find it a refuge in the hour of danger and distress, when they contributed nothing to its strength in the days of their safety and prosperity.

The vices and virtues are not indigenous to the human soul, though there are some who contend for the natural depravity of man; however this may be, it appears rather that the mind is a blank on which it is unfortunately easier to inscribe the characters of vice than of virtue. The former, like those she inspires, lies lurking in ambush and in darkness, to seize her prey; she can similate and dissimilate, and while appealing to the senses, is anxious to leave our reason asleep: like the midnight marauder, who avails himself of the treachery of our servants, but avoids arousing

the vigilance of the house-dog. Vice then cannot be too carefully guarded against, as she owes all her strength to our weakness. Virtue, on the other hand, would call forth our reason, as her best friend, and places our senses under subjection as her worst enemies. To be won she must be wooed, to be preserved she must be faithfully served; but it is a service which is richly rewarded, for our weakness may always rely with security on her strength.

Mrs. Belmont was also the possessor of one of the most important essentials of human happiness,—a good temper, a quality which had been largely called into exercise by the irritability of his to whom her destiny was united.

From the constitution of society, the government of temper is more necessary to woman than to man; her situation continually exposes her to circumstances in which patience and gentleness are more immediately requisite. There are ills in life that force cannot conquer, though meekness may subdue; which violence cannot expel, but gentleness may avert. While a bad temper yields to the petty grievances of life, a good one overcomes them; the former renders us disgusting to society, and unfit for the kind interchanges of friendship and affection; how much more unfit then must it make us to converse with "Him in whom we live, and move, and have our being." Temper is the porter of the mind, and religion is too dignified a visitant to seek the habitation which is guarded by so surly a one as a bad temper, while on the contrary its opposite invites her approach and propitiates her stay. "A good mind easily assimilates with religion, but one

soured by discontent, or agitated by turbulent passions, will admit nothing exhilarating." Nay, it fosters that which will sting the bosom wherein it has been cherished, for there is no recoil so certain; the sally that was directed at another, only weakens ourselves, and at once leaves us open to attack, and incapable of defence.

"Whoso diggeth a pit shall fall therein."

The woman who possesses sweetness of temper, obtains credit for many virtues which perhaps she may not possess; like sunshine, it beautifies many things which have in themselves no intrinsic lustre.

Feeling, as Mrs. Belmont did, that the aggregate of life is made up of trifles, and more especially the life of woman, because it is her province to enter into the minute details of existence; it was her earliest care to infuse that "balm of being" in Adela's bosom. She thought the sweetness, the gentleness, which is the result of that halcyon tone of mind, was one of the constituents of beauty. She saw in her child the delicate outline of form and feature, from which the Grecian sculptor formed his deathless works of genius and of beauty; but she knew the perfection of her charms depended on that principle which imparts benignity to the countenance, and softness to the air. Thus she sedulously cultivated all the milder, gentler qualities and sensibilities of Adela's young nature. Often would she converse on the subject, and illustrate it with characters from real life: on one of these occasions, she drew a sketch in which many it is feared may trace the portaiture of themselves.

"Diane," she said as she held Adela's hand, and gazed with maternal delight on her intelligent countenance, "was my cousin, and though many years older than me, we were much together. Her lively wit and animated beauty, won a heart formed to love with the deepest, truest tenderness; and in early life she became a wife and mother, and might have been a happy one. She had rank and beauty, wealth and love, many virtues and much intellect; you will ask then what made her otherwise?—the want of temper. Believe me if it is not the inspirer, it is certainly the preserver of love. She was often gay, but she was not habitually cheerful; as the darkest nights will emit momentary flashes of brilliancy, but it is the day that dispenses sunshine. She rattled in society, but never harmonized with it; even with all the aid of wit, she was but the comet of the company, whose erratic lustre caught by surprize and dazzled for a moment; but neither warmed the heart, nor exhilarated the mind. Captivated by her brilliancy Monsieur Lorraine made her an offer of his hand, which she accepted. While the change was yet new, and the little difficulties and duties inseparable from her station were yet distant, she lost little of her *eclat;* but, like all false ornament, the gilding gradually wore away. She became petulant to her husband, tyrannical to her servants, irritable with her children. In vain Lorraine reminded her, that all that is done by violence, can be effected as well, nay much better, by gentleness: that the *request* is often complied with, when the *command* is defied: that when the sun and the wind attacked the traveller with the view of inducing him to part with

his cloak, all the boisterous force of the latter, only induced him to wrap it more closely around him, while he instantly surrendered it to the melting influence of the sun. These and similar arguments I have frequently heard him use, but they availed nothing. The moment she rose her voice was heard in murmurings or upbraidings. She spoke of the most simple, most trifling things with asperity. Her servants revolted from her authority; the duties which under proper management, they would have performed with cheerfulness, they neglected or only half did. Her children, whose minds were cultivated and regulated by their father, who had much difficulty in counteracting the ill effects of their mother's example, forbore it is true to oppose her openly; but they internally condemned her proceedings, and often reasoned among themselves on her want of temper and conduct. Reasoning is fatal to all government, whether domestic or political, where the ruler is faulty. As might be supposed, it weakened their affection and lessened their respect for her. Frequently have I known them experience more pleasure in a refusal from their father, than in a compliance from their mother. Thus, though possessed of some of the sterling virtues which constitute a wife, a mother, and the mistress of a family; like a diamond that wants the advantages of cutting and setting, neither her friends, her children, nor her servants, gave her credit for the good qualities she really possessed.

"This my Adela," she would continue, "is the fate of those who indulge a perverse and wayward temper. Time, which takes something from them all, makes

them desolate indeed, and in the winter of life they are left 'to devour their own hearts in solitude and contempt.' Despised rather than feared, shunned as we do wasps and hornets, they become aliens from the relationships of friendship and affection, and 'give up the felicity of being loved without gaining the honour of being reverenced.'"

The cold evenings of November were fast approaching, and Lady Milsom began to think of leaving Matlock, particularly as the daily amendment in the health of Mr. Finley and Lord Elmer, promised her the pleasure of uniting them to the number of her guests; but so delightful to her were the social evenings, after the curtains were drawn and the circle approached the fire, that she still found some pretext for delay. Sir Hubert and Lady Auber had departed for Norfolk; Lord Egremont had been called into Scotland; and Mr. Chudleigh obeyed a summons from some gentlemen of the long robe, and took wing for the deserted metropolis, from which every thing that wore the livery of fashion had long fled.

"I suppose," cried Lady Milsom, as she entered the saloon one evening, "I shall shortly be left, like '*Le Cavalier seul*,' to figure away as I can by myself. Every day I am informed of some new desertion. Mr. Chudleigh departed yesterday. Who am I to lose next?"

"I shall make my *conge* in a day or two," cried Seeton with a melancholy smile. "I shall have the honour of protecting these ladies," bowing to Miss Egremont and Lady Ruthven, "to his lordship's seat at Woburn."

"Whither I also shall accompany them," added the Captain; and taking his niece aside, he began a whispering conversation of which the valetudinarians were the subject. In recommending them strongly to her ladyship's attention, he not only urged from present circumstances his own inability to recompense by the distinctions of friendship and hospitality, the sufferings they had endured through the folly and rashness of Frederic and Caroline, but urged their connections, and the distinguished place they were destined to hold in the world, and how ill he could bear provoking cause of enmity or ill will from such families.

Lady Milsom smiled at his closing arguments, and laying her hand on his arm, said, in an arch though low tone—

"Can you think of no other way of healing their wounds than by recommending them to me? Go plead for Lord Elmer with Miss Belmont—for Mr. Finley with Caroline."

"How!" exclaimed the Captain with looks of quick apprehension. "For Heaven's sake, dear Emilia, what is it you mean?"

"I think it is very obvious," said she, still smiling. "Do you think Mr. Finley would have risked his neck, for any one who had not some hold on his heart? Come give them your blessing before you depart, and that will do more for his convalescence, than the hospitality and friendship of all the young wives and their spouses in the kingdom."

"You are not used to trifle Emilia," cried her uncle, still distressed and confounded. "Remember he is a younger son, and very poor."

"Emilia is teazing you, Captain Auber," cried Lord Milsom, approaching. "What have you been proposing or suggesting," he continued taking her hand, "or what is the point on which you differ?"

"I sadly fear," replied the young bride, "that my uncle thinks with Milton's Satan that it is,

'Better to reign in hell than serve in heaven.'

I would fain persuade him that rank and wealth make not the difference he imagines."

"You do not surely uphold the doctrine of universal equality?" cried Lady Ruthven.

Lady Milsom hesitated; she saw the conversation was likely to take a different turn from what she intended, and that her uncle's narrow prejudices would be but too strongly supported. Finding she did not speak, her husband replied—

"The doctrine of universal equality is so absurd that it is ridiculous to meet it with argument."

"Certainly," replied Seeton,

'Order is Heaven's first law, and that confest,
Some are and must be greater than the rest.'

Nature has not made us equal, there are a million of grades of worth, intellect, strength, and beauty, which must produce real, if society did not make nominal, distinctions—it is with the arbitrary nature of the latter that Lady Milsom is at variance. Is it not so?" he continued, turning to her.

"In truth it is," replied she; "I am not a little disgusted at the unjust preferences, the undue precedencies, which arise from the mere circumstances of

being elder or younger sons, lineal or collateral descendants, and to see the extent of possessions and expectancies regulate the estimation in which individuals are to be held."

"The error or justice of suffering our conduct to be regulated by these things depends much upon circumstances," observed the Earl of Errol. "Since all is gradation in nature and society; as from magnitude to minuteness there is a continued chain, to break any of the links would be to disturb the order, and endanger the happiness of the world. The monarch has his regalia, the bishop his lawn, the judge his ermine; you would infringe none of these ordinances, then why should you object to give elder and richer sons, the place of poorer and younger ones."

"Because she has some poor client in that predicament, I suppose," said Miss Egremont, "whom her ladyship finds some difficulties in patronizing; some poor nobody who has had art enough to persuade her that they make up by their natural excellencies for their want of birth and fortune;" and she glanced a sneer at Adela who just then entered the room.

"Indeed you give me a very undue distinction," replied her ladyship; "I am no patroness, but were I ever to assume that character, it certainly would be in favour of those whose genius and virtues, like the ore in the mine, are unnoticed and unvalued because they have not received the impress which gives currency to metal the most base and most alloyed;" and reaching her hand to Adela as she spoke, she placed her by her side on the couch.

Secton Auber never regarded his lovely cousin with

more affection and with more admiration that at that moment.

"The old stuff," rejoined Miss Egremont, "virtue is true nobility."

But no one seemed inclined to attend to her but her aunt and the Captain, with whom she kept up the subject, while Mr. Auber turned to Oscar Finley, exclaiming—

"Are you fancying *Herculaneum* and *Pompeii* in the fire?"

"Indeed, and perhaps I am," he replied; "I was always fond of revery, whether by firelight or moonlight."

"Ah!" rejoined Secton, "when recollections 'sad as realities, and wild as dreams,' come thronging round the heart. You love the dun colouring of twilight, and the silence which comes forth as the usher of evening, to prepare her still path of gloom and grandeur."

"Then by your account silence is the usher of the black rod," cried Oscar. "I think you are rather painting from yourself than from me; my poetical vagaries are all over; my harp as mute as that of Carolan. I am no longer a page in waiting upon Apollo; but have slid in among the lords in waiting at court, and mean particularly to attach myself to *Gold stick*."

Never tell me, Oscar," cried Secton; "thou art a true son of the muses, 'wedded to immortal verse.' who would as soon forget to repeat the sound that called upon her, as thou the charms of song. Think you I've lost all memory of our college days?"

"Nevertheless I have abjured the passion, and I can apostrophize poesy as Goldsmith did:

'Dear charming maid neglected and decried
My shame in crowds, my solitary pride;
Thou source of all my bliss and all my woe,
Who found me poor at first, and keep'st me so;
Thou guide by which the nobler arts excel,
Thou nurse of every virtue, fare thee well!'"

"Ah! that's much too sweet, too affectionate an adieu to be a last one," observed Seeton smiling, "you did not go far before you turned back again; but go on with those beautiful lines. They bear upon the subject of the late argument; and convince some of these apostates from the homage of portionless virtue and untitled talent, that there is happiness and distinction beyond that which courts or wealth confer."

"A poet is ever held to be a poor authority in such a case, however we will try his power for once.

'Farewell, and O! where'er thy voice be tried,
On Torno's Cliffs, or Pambamarca's side,
Whether where equinoctial fervours glow,
Or winter wraps the Polar world in snow;
Still let thy voice, prevailing, over time
Redress the rigours of th' inclement clime:
And slighted truth with thy persuasive strain:
Teach erring man to spurn the rage of gain.
Teach him that states of native strength possess'd,
Though very poor may still be very bless'd;
That trade's proud empire hastes to swift decay,
As ocean sweeps the labour'd mole away;
While self-dependent power can time defy,
As rocks resist the billows and the sky.'"

"If wealth cannot confer happiness," observed Seeton Auber as soon as Mr. Finley concluded these

lines, "surely the honours of birth and ancestry are still more barren."

"It is very certain," cried Clarence, "that the ranks of genius owe infinitely less to the elevated than to the humble classes of mankind. The man of genius is ennobled by the gifts of God: the man of rank by those of kings. Which is the higher source? Which are the proudest distinctions? Demosthenes was the son of a smith. Virgil's father was a potter. Cicero's an obscure Roman; though some maintain his lineal descent from the Sabine kings: but were it so, had all the blood of all the Sabine monarchs conferred distinction upon him beyond the period in which he lived, would it have transmitted him to posterity as his genius has done?"

The court party, not inclined for controversy, pretended to be occupied by their own topics of debate, and the opposing party lost some of the piquancy they would have sported, from meeting no opposition. The contested ball is the only one that is pursued with spirit.

"How much genius can fling its golden light on origins the most obscure and degrading," observed Secton, "the literary history of every country attests. What was *Franklin?* What was *Rousseau?* did his father's being a cobler deteriorate from the magic of his style, the delicacy of his sensibility, the elegance of his ideas? *Diderot* was the child of a watchmaker; *Flechier* of a tallow-chandler; *Massillon* of a tanner. The literary phalanx of England is perhaps still more solid—Johnson—Akenside—might head a list too tedious to enumerate."

"Next to a man of genius," said Lord Elmer, "do I covet the society of those who are much with them; as the Persian story declared the common earth to be perfumed where roses grow, so do I find minds sweetened and improved by the intercommunion with the brilliant and enlightened. I look back on some hours of *my* life that were so illumined with regret."

"Why so?" cried Caroline; "you have no fear but that they will return again. The fair field of time is yet before you in its first freshness, and universal cultivation has rendered talent common."

"'Tis true," replied his lordship; "yet all recollections of the past have a tinge of sadness—the very circumstance that they are gone never to return, is of itself sufficient to imbue them with the hue of melancholy."

"To those who are determined to cultivate nightshade, the opportunity will never be wanting:" remarked the Earl of Errol. "How remarkable is the difference between the constitution of the French and English mind! The first turns a subject about to see what gaiety he can make out of it—does it prove dark and bitter, he throws it by; while an Englishman, on the contrary, is much disappointed if he discover not some shade even in the brightest objects."

"Both dispositions are objectional when carried to the excess they often are:" said Seeton. "The results they produce are however much in favour of the English. *Le François* chooses his friends as a lady does her flowers, wears them a little while, and then throws them by for others that possess the charms of novelty; thus he skips on to the close of his career,

surrounded by some of the *debris* of his former pleasures, and pursuing new butterflies, and choosing new chaplets and bouquets, that mock his efforts to seize them, and render him ridiculous by the incongruous association. But the Englishman who has regarded with perhaps too proud a scorn the ephemeral flowers of life, has cultivated evergreens amid which he sinks into the repose of age, surrounded and supported by by friends familiarized by habit, and dignified by time."

"I hope you believe there may be exceptions;" said Clarence, smiling and colouring slightly. "I assure you frivolity and inconstancy are not unfrequently the apparent without being the real constituents of character. It is not that we never know melancholy, but we reserve it for ourselves exclusively, while the English share it liberally with all around them."

"Upon my word," cried Seeton, "you are so much an Englishman in appearance and manner, that I forgot you are not really such; for probably I should not so freely have hazarded my opinion."

Lord Milsom (who had left the saloon) at this moment again entered, and his father stopped him as he was passing on, saying—

"I shall commit another robbery. Yesterday I accidentally discovered an old journal of my brother's. It is peculiarly interesting to me, as it details many particulars of his residence in Italy after I left him, and returned to England."

"Pray take possession of it," replied his son, "It fell into my hands with other papers, at his son Reginald's death; and though above three years

have elasped, I have neither had time nor curiosity enough to examine them."

"This manuscript will be a subject of intrest to more than me I fancy," resumed the Earl of Errol; "very frequent mention is made of Mr. Belmont."

Adela started to hear her father's name, and Seeton Auber also turned to give his undivided attention to the earl.

"If Miss Belmont," continued his lordship, "will favour me with her company in the library to morrow morning, I will point out the passages that relate to her father, and some others of her family."

"I shall wait with impatience for the privileged hour:" cried she, smiling with almost filial sweetness on his lordship. "The period of my father's residence in 'sunny Florence,' is one with which I am little acquainted. It is full of recollections the most agonizing to my mother, and therefore I have never pressed the subject; but since without wounding *her*, I may become informed of what so much interests me, I would not forego the happiness for the universe!"

"Then my sweet Miss Belmont will be amply gratified—probably there is even yet more in this mysterious chest, which we will examine together, if you are not afraid of a little dust. My acquaintance with Mr. Belmont was comparatively slight; my brother and he were inseparables; we may find letters which, as the production of your father, will be to you invaluable."

The earl engrossed our heroine for the remainder of the evening; so interesting to her was the subject on

which they conversed; and long after she retired, she indulged speculative reveries, as to what the morrow would reveal.

The next morning she tripped away from the breakfast-table to the library with a palpitating heart. The earl always breakfasted alone, and sometimes extremely early, so that detained as she had been by one and another, although but few of the family had assembled, she almost feared she might be keeping his lordship waiting; but on entering, she found the library vacant. Pleased to find herself thus early, she took up the first book that presented itself, and assumed a seat near the window. It was Lalla Rook, a brilliant cabinet of

"All that the young heart loves most,
Flowers, music, smiles."

And as she hung on its sparkling flow of melody and imagery, other scenes and thoughts than those she came to pursue, rose in her mind. The spirit of romance, the vividness of hope, caught new tints under the influence of such a spell, and she looked the personification of one of those lovely creations of the muse of Moore, as the library door opened and Mr. Auber entered.

He glanced his eyes rapidly round the room to ascertain that she was alone, then springing forward he took her hand. The pleasure of seeing him usually banished from her mind every other thought; rising to meet him full of surprise and delight, delight perhaps more marked than it had ever been before, she did not perceive he was in a travelling dress.

"This is beyond my hopes:" he cried, "Oh! Miss

Belmont that this trial had been spared me, or that I had the wisdom to spare myself! Did we follow the counsel of the silent monitor that speaks within we should always do right—I should have flown you from the first—I should have flown you now without beholding you."

Adela coloured deeply; her first blush had been that of pleasure, her second was that of conscious love allied to shame; but she endeavoured to disguise it with a laugh as she replied—

"You are talking at random, and yet with an air so serious that I know not whether it were proper for me to laugh or weep."

"Flattering to me—precious to me, as would be a tear from you," he replied, "I would not put my fortitude to such a task—no, it is for you to smile—it were sacrilege to gloom your radiance for a moment—for me tears, sighs, and exile be alone reserved."

"Now if you were rehearsing the part of *Toscari*," cried she, endeavouring to hide how much the pathos of his manner touched her, "I should give you every promise of a successful performance."

"Toscari," rejoined Seeton, absorbed by an idea that he carried to madness, "was poor amid all that makes the real wealth of man. With 'one fond breast to which his own could melt, what country could be exile? Had I been him they might have banished me, to any waste, to any desert, I had turned to her and said,

'In exile thy bosom shall still be my home,
And thine eyes make my climate wherever we roam.'"

The softness of his expressive eyes, the touching tones of his harmonious voice, gave a meaning to the words, beyond what they expressed. Adela felt that she was the chosen of *his* heart, as he was of hers. She looked down while a sigh stole from her lips, but so low that Seeton doubted whether he had heard aright. He gazed upon her an instant in silence and then resumed—

"Will you pardon my curiosity; but may I inquire if you design remaining the guest of Lady Milsom, or do you contemplate a return to Wales?"

"Indeed I do not know. I never have regulated my own actions and now less than ever."

"Who is that enviable being who has assumed the right of guiding you? To whom have you accorded such a privilege?"

"Lady Milsom and your sister always decide for me."

"And is there no one else that has an influence?"

A new glow of confusion suffused her cheek; she could have replied there *was* one, whose influence was paramount to all others, and that, that one stood before her; but she could neither affirm or deny, and again Mr. Auber spoke—

"Tell me my sweet Miss Belmont, with the confidence you would repose in a tried friend, with the confidence due to a brother of Caroline, is it in my power to serve you? Can I in any way promote your happiness? I am now leaving you—our ever meeting again is uncertain—many are the events that may occur in that interval—it were a consolation to bear away with me some mission to fulfil for you."

Adela started—his dress, his manner, his conversation all now burst upon her at once with the conviction that this was a farewell interview. Her paling cheek attested the sickening sensation of her heart. Her voice was faint as she exclaimed—

"You are leaving Matlock then?"

"This morning," he replied. "The determination of Lady Ruthven has been sudden; I had hoped I had yet two or three days of happiness remaining; but it is not so; and this," continued he taking her hand, "is perhaps the last time I shall behold Miss Belmont—could she read my heart, see would see it glowing with the most ardent wishes for her happiness. Would to heaven she would permit me to prove the sincerity of those wishes by confiding in me as a friend. You are unhappy!" he added, as he pressed her hand to his breast.

"God knows I am," she exclaimed, bursting into tears she could no longer restrain; "leave me, sir, I entreat you; but O! take with you my wishes, my prayers for your happiness! Leave me, or suffer me to retire."

"I shall never forgive myself," resumed Mr. Auber, detaining her, "for having been the occasion of this emotion; but like a surgeon I probe the wound only with the view of healing it. I have long seen you had some cause of sorrow; there is a distressing mystery hangs about you, so unlike the disengaged and open-minded bearing you had when I first beheld you, that I have a thousand times been tempted, to address you openly on the subject. O! Miss Belmont, your extreme youth requires a friend, more than all your

gentle, your unsuspecting nature requires an adviser. Your mother is far from you, she is from your own confession a stranger to some persons with whom you are at present in the habits of intimacy—such a situation is fraught with danger."

Adela saw that he alluded to Clarence, but resolved not to betray the confidence Caroline had reposed in her; and not knowing how to excuse the apparent understanding that existed between her and that unfortunate young man, she remained silent.

"Did you know," continued Mr. Auber, "the torture I am inflicting on myself, it would palliate my conduct in persevering in so distressing a subject. I would have acted through the agency of my sister, but she would not listen to me—she treats all that alarms my fears as groundless chimeras—I have therefore had no other alternative than addressing yourself on the subject. The first step is every thing—you perhaps wish, as much as you dread, an explanation with your mother—let me act for you—rely on my honour—on my fidelity—empower me to make her acquainted with the circumstances in which you are entangled—or will you—"and he hesitated as he spoke, "permit me to obtain explanations of any one else?"

He remained silent, and Adela found herself obliged to answer—

"Be assured sir," she replied, "you are acting under a mistake—there is no necessity for your interference."

"I feel the awkwardness, and the presumption of my attempting to do so; but I cannot see you hovering on the verge of a precipice, without warning you

of your danger. You are ignorant of the world, unsuspicious of baseness, which lurks but too often under a captivating exterior. My dear, my beautiful Miss Belmont, do you not deem me trust worthy?"

"O! Mr. Auber, you cannot imagine how much you are distressing me—it tells me from circumstances over which I have no power, how much I must have suffered in your good opinion. I will return to Wales—would to heaven I had never quitted it! How often since have I had occasion to wish it!"

"I see," cried Mr. Auber, "how much I have distressed, perhaps offended you. Few as are the moments I have to spend with you, you perhaps wish them fewer."

"O! no, no, no,' cried she involuntarily, inexpressibly hurt at his manner, and again yielded to tears.

He took her hand, and pressing it between both his, resumed all the tenderness of his first address—

"My lovely Miss Belmont, I am shocked beyond expression at this excessive emotion, I will briefly dismiss a topic which I shall perhaps never have either opportunity or occasion to broach again. I have, without discovering my motives, ascertained that the individual who awakens my fears, has neither relatives abroad, nor friends here; he has neither fortune or expectancy, and that a dark mystery hangs on the adventures of his former life. All this I have ascertained from various sources, and this piecemeal knowledge when put together has certainly been the source of much suspicion and many fears. Are you acquaint ed with these circumstances?"

"I am," replied Adela, "but——"

"Pardon me," resumed he, "for interrupting you, though I honour the candour, the sincerity which has made you acquainted with these painful particulars, yet what are the terrors for your fate that they do not engender! How little are you fitted to be the sharer of the precarious fortune of an adventurer!—a being of such delicacy, such sensibility."

"You are in error, indeed you are," cried Adela, much confused.

"Deal with me sincerely," cried Mr. Auber, "be above the subterfuges in which your sex delight to take refuge. This stranger, fortunate in that, if pursued by a destiny the most adverse, has certainly awakened an interest in your heart."

He changed colour as he spoke, and gazed on her with eyes that sought to penetrate the inmost recesses of her soul.

"He has awakened an interest," said she ingenuously, "such as any one so amiable and so unfortunate would be sure to excite in any breast of common feeling."

"Your fancied security only renders your danger the greater. You are deceiving yourself Miss Belmont. How do you know that this being possesses the qualities with which your imagination invests him?"

"O! my heart told me he was as worthy as he was unhappy the moment I beheld him."

"And is your heart so infallible a judge?"

"Yes, I believe every one possesses an instinctive perception of truth and falsehood, but it becomes darkened by the world and some modes of education

—Acquainted with his story, the moment I beheld him, I loved him—"

"Loved him!" echoed Mr. Auber, almost out of breath.

"As a brother," concluded Adela.

"You never had a brother," rejoined Seeton more calmly, "how then can you judge? But," he added, starting as the sound of a clock rose on his ear, "I should have entered on this subject long since—now there neither time nor opportunity for it. Promise me to examine your heart; believe me the more you trust it the more it will betray you. Remember your mother should have your confidence—and that mystery may sometimes shroud innocence, but it is more often the veil of error. And lastly, O! my sweet Miss Belmont, my loveliest friend, promise if at any hour you stand in need of aid, promise that you will remember Seeton Auber! Speak, let me hear you say you will," he continued as he passionately kissed her hand.

"I will," cried she, yielding it to him and averting her head to hide her tears; and then with a strong effort to master her feelings, she added—"Farewell, sir, may you be happy."

"Never!" replied he. "There is not that being on earth whose fate is farther from happiness than mine; but it is worse than madness to talk of that. One more request I would make; will you permit me to write to you—and will you answer my letters?"

Adela assented in silence, she did not dare to trust her voice with a reply.

"Ten thousand thanks, I have yet something of happiness. Once more adieu."

Adela sunk back in her chair the moment he had closed the door, and silently exclaimed—

> "He is gone,
> And I, who would have given my blood for him,
> Have nought to give but tears!"

and was yet yielding to the excess of her feelings, when the Earl entered, attended by Clarence. Her handkerchief covered her face which was deluged by weeping.

"What is the matter my dear child?" cried his lordship, "why have you suffered the memory of events so long past thus to disturb you," as he attributed her disordered spirits, to recollections attached to her parents.

"Will your lordship excuse me if I withdraw, I am unequal to the task I proposed myself. Some other time—"

She rose, and the old Earl, always really concerned at distress, but more particularly when appearing in a form like Adela's, drew her towards him with parental tenderness and kissed her forehead; as he did so, he felt her tremble, and turning to Clarence he desired him to support Miss Belmont to her room.

Clarence drew her passive arm within his, and smiling with effort an adieu to his lordship, she suffered herself to be led from the library.

"Something more vivid than events buried in the lapse of time has awakened this emotion I fear," cried her supporter as he conducted her along the corridor. "Has any thing occurred in which I can be of any service?"

"No. O! no," replied Adela faintly.

"Remember," he cried as they reached the staircase that led to her room, "how much right you have to command me, that but for you I had been the most miserable of men, but now blest beyond my boldest hopes—"

"O! heavens!" ejaculated Adela as the form of Seeton Auber passing her on the stairs caught her eye; he turned, but seeing Clarence support her, he went on. He was some way down just as Adela had reached the foot of the staircase: his first feeling was to turn back and so avoid meeting them, but a moment's hesitation rendered it too late; he caught the eye of Clarence just as he finished his last sentence, and had no alternative but to pursue his way, which he did with so much swiftness as would have startled Adela had it even been any other than himself. But to meet him, attended as she was, created anguish. Perhaps Clarence's words had reached him, and all these appearances she felt would but strengthen the suspicions he already entertained.

Happy was she to gain theprivacy of her own room to compose her spirits, and review the circumstances of the morning, Seeton was leaving Matlock; in a few hours he would be far from her, perhaps for ever. She might hear of him, but it would as the husband of another—he was lost to her, and she to life. She thought instantly of returning home; the tie that had held her was broken, and she resolved to inform Lady Milsom of her intention that evening.

In the midst of these reveries her door was gently opened, and Lady Ruthven entered.

"Heavens! my dear Miss Belmont, what ails you? You are as pale as death, and have been weeping, I declare," cried her ladyship.

Adela endeavoured to account for her appearance, on the plea of being subject to low spirits, and her visitor was too well bred to dwell on a painful subject.

"To find you so much indisposed," she resumed, "adds to the feeling of regret with which I come to take leave of you. I am also the bearer of Miss Egremont's farewell compliments."

Adela bowed in acknowledgment to the last piece of information, expressed a little civil regret at the loss of Lady Ruthven's society, and observed, she feared they should not soon meet again."

"Oh! why not?" said her ladyship, "I shall be at the Earl of Errol's, and of course so will you."

"The Earl of Errol's!" repeated Adela, "endeavouring to collect her scattered thoughts and recollections.

"Yes: have you forgotten all that has been promised us at Richmond, I assure you I mean to sing jubilate there—and I hope you have no intention of absenting yourself."

All thoughts of returning to Wales now vanished from her mind. The hope of meeting Seeton Auber again, came like new life upon her heart, and Richmond became immediately the sole point of attraction in the vista of time.

Lady Ruthven withdrew, just as a servant entered to inform her that Miss Egremont was already seated in the carriage, Adela accompanied her to the head of

the stairs, and pausing there heard Secton's voice as he crossed the hall; she heard the steps of the carriage put up, the slap of the closed door, and the wheel-round as they drove out of the court yard: then the hall door closed, the heavy step of the porter sounded over the marble floor, all again was hushed; and to her, who yet leaned upon the balusters, the mansion appeared one vast tomb, so lone, so desolate did she feel.

Returning to her own room, she reviewed and re-reviewed all that the morning had given rise to, and the only circumstance from which she could extract consolation, was the prospect of again meeting the object of her unfortunate attachment, at Richmond, and receiving letters from him in the mean time.

The love that animated Adela's bosom was such as warmed the breast of Lara's page. Had it been practicable she would have sought refuge in disguise, endured privation, pain, nay even degradation, to have traced his steps, to have breathed where he breathed, to have gazed on him, to have listened to him. Formed to feel with intensity, the secrecy with which she had cherished the passion, had increased its strength and its devotedness. All that was bright and interesting in life besides was tame, was valueless in comparison. She had no pleasures, no pains, no hopes, no fears, but as they bore reference to him. She had no thought unmixed with some idea of him. Her religious duties, which were those of an enthusiast, the glowings of a breast full of the quickest feelings, the aspirations of a mind intertissued with the most varied, most vivid tints of a brilliant imagi-

nation, were all blended with hopes, wishes, and appeals for him. In the eloquence of the extemporary prayer, which she poured forth of a morning, his name was the first and the most fervently dwelt on. Amid the magnificent scenes of nature, when she read the Maker in his works, the homage that flew like wafted incense up to heaven, carried his name along with it: and at night, when the day was past, solitude invited meditation, the last orisons of the night closed as those of the morning had begun.

Her mother, who till now, had been the centre-piece of her heart, came upon her soul in companionship with him. All she had ever heard her utter in his praise was registered in the most sacred recesses of memory. In fact, from the moment they met, he became the arbiter of her thoughts, and the song that she sung with most truth, was one that breathed the sentiment of her soul, and which they had once sung together:—

"The dawning of morn, the daylight's sinking,
The night's long hours still find me thinking,
Of thee, thee, only thee.
When friends are met, and goblets crowned,
And smiles are near, that once enchanted;
Unreached by all that sunshine round,
My soul, like some dark spot, is haunted
By thee, thee, only thee.

Whate'er in fame's high path could waken
My spirit once, is now forsaken
For thee, thee, only thee.
Like shores, by which some headlong bark
To the ocean hurries—resting never,
Life's scenes gone by me bright and dark,
I know not, heed not, hastening ever
To thee, thee, only thee.

I have not a joy but of thy bringing,
And pain itself seems sweet, when springing
From thee, thee, only thee.
Like spells, that nought on earth can break,
Till lips that know the charm, have spoken;
This heart, howe'er the world my wake
Its grief, its scorn, can but be broken
By thee, thee, only thee."

## CHAPTER XXIV.

"Oh! to gaze
Upon the pillar'd wrecks—lone monuments
Of times that were—but are not."

MATURIN.

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The Earl of Errol, who was as fond of bibliography, as ever was ancient scribe before the days of printing, began to arrange his manuscripts, and collect his books, the moment Miss Belmont had withdrawn; but he was much disconcerted on missing the principal object of his attention, the Journal that he had recently discovered. Deeming it probable that it might have been replaced by some one in the trunk, he rang the bell, and had the box of papers drawn from under the table, and placed upon a chair, so as to facilitate his examining the contents.

The servants withdrew, and he commenced his task, with that air of satisfaction with which every man rides his hobby horse. He had scarcely taken

the first slow survey of the treasure which the raising of the lid disclosed to him, than he perceived a confusion and disarrangement in the appearance of the papers, which they had not exhibited before. They seemed to have undergone a very unceremonious examination, or probably might have been thrown into disorder by the sudden upsetting of the chest.

His lordship stood for some moments in conjecture, when it occurred to him that his son might have anticipated him in the examination. Lord Milsom he knew was out, he therefore determined to reserve his inquiries till after dinner, and in the mean time to sort the mass of scraps and fragments that invited his curiosity.

On Clarence's return the earl made him take a seat near him, and with some of the garrulity of age, and much of the affability of good nature, began to descant on many subjects which were successively presented to his mind by the papers that passed through his hands.

At last he took up a very large roll, which on expanding proved to be a fine view of Rome. On looking into it minutely, Clarence discerned the name of Belmont traced in one of the corners, and showed it to the Earl.

"Poor fellow!" cried his lordship, "he was an ingenious artist, as this specimen of his talent, had I seen no other, would have convinced me. There is the Rotunda, admirably and faithfully portrayed, with its stately columns and its noble entrance. There is St. Peter's, the stupendous design of Michael Angelo, how magnificent a mind was he gifted with!

You have been in Italy?" continued the earl, turning to Clarence. He replied in the negative.

"I would give half my fortune that I had such a pleasure in reserve. To a mind stored with classical lore it is the theatre of true enjoyment. You live among all that was great and glorious in former days. Augustus, and the galaxy of genius that distinguished his age, appear to rise around you. In the wide serenity of the Pantheon, in the awful magnificence of St. Peter's, by the columns of Trajan and Aurelius, what memories crowd upon the mind!"

"There are no recollections more proudly gratifying," replied Clarence, as Lord Errol turned over the leaves of a manuscript entitled "Recollections of my own Life."

"This is Belmont's writing," cried his lordship, and throwing himself back in his chair, he presented it to Clarence, and desired him to read it aloud, remarking that he felt a new interest in all that concerned him, since he had become acquainted with his daughter Miss Belmont.

Clarence complied, and clearing his voice began:—

"Once more I am beneath my native skies. Once more I am within view of the home of my fathers; but it bears for me the cold climate of another atmosphere, it presents to me nothing but the repelling fronts of envy and animosity. I will not tear afresh the wounds, so long seared; I will not renew the discord so long ceased. My rights have been invaded some few years before they ought, and perhaps were I to engage in the disgusting struggle, it would only be to spend the close of my existence in contention.

There is nothing in life worth the efforts, the painful efforts we often make to enrich and to embellish it.

"The science of mine has been to parry the blows which a malignant fortune has largely dealt me,—its triumph has been to survive them with a mind unsubdued, and a spirit unbroken: and, let me say, it is a great and an enduring pleasure to make foiled malignity at last relax its efforts to check the soarings of a generous mind: to see it fall back with a debasing consciousness of impotency, and obliged to let its destined victim soar away on the strong wing of innocence and power.

"This was a pleasure to which all my faculties expanded as I left Noel trailing his slime of sycophancy around my father and my uncle. I had survived the blight of his malignant wishes. I had escaped the toils, the snares, which he had spread for me, and unassisted, unalleviated as is the toil with which I tread the steep acclivities of fortune, I hold it not merely a prouder, but a happier path, than the highway of legalized rapine, along which the chariot of my adversary rolls."

"Will your lordship pardon my interrupting this narrative, the sentiments of which find an echo in my heart, to inquire if Mr. Belmont was of Scottish extraction, and whether the Noel here named is one of the family from whom I claim the noblest of friends?"

Lord Errol evidently did not like the inquiry, and hesitated ere he replide; at length he said—

"Mr. Belmont was of Scottish descent, and Mr. Malcolm Noel comes of a distant branch of the same family."

"Most singular," replied Clarence, "Miss Belmont and he appear not to evince the least consciousness of relationship."

"It scarcely deserves to be recognized, I imagine, it is so distant. But you will hold these circumstances sacred. If, as I begin to suspect, papers of more importance come to light, Mrs. Belmont will be the proper person to address on the subject, and I presume you would have no objection to act as my delegate in the business."

"To serve the cause of the lovely Miss Belmont," he replied, were of itself a sufficient stimulus to make me traverse the farthest part of the globe; but I have also an invincible desire to behold her mother. Therefore, my lord, there is no trust with which you could honour me, I would more delightedly, more sacredly perform."

"You will see something of her if you resume the manuscript, I guess; for I caught her name as I glanced through it," said the Earl. And Clarence resumed his reading with new interest.

"Under such feelings there is a pleasure even in poverty—in calamity, springing from conscious superiority and independence. The sense of suffering loses half its poignancy when we feel it to be undeserved: hence the heroism of martyrs. The martyr has *that* glowing at his heart, which acts as an antidote to the torture he is doomed to suffer: buoyed up with enthusiasm and self-applause, his sufferings are mitigated more than would readily be imagined. This turn of thought and sentiment has borne me, insensible to mental and physical anguish, through

many a rough path. Perhaps the vast space that I have traversed, the various scenes in which I have mixed, the very altitude of the mountains on which I have often paused to meditate, have contributed to foster, and strengthen these ideas, since the mind is greatly affected by external objects. Perhaps tied down to some soul-subduing pursuit, deprived of the power of locomotion, and fresh air, I might have sunk, like many an unpitied wretch, withered and debased, helpless and repining. The misfortune which drives a man to active and laborious exertion, even at the most inadequate recompense, makes him far less an object of pity, than that severer fate which leaves him in lone obscurity, saps his spirits, and invades his energies."

"Oh! my lord," exclaimed Clarence, as a break in the manuscript permitted him to pause, "How deeply have I felt that loneliness of soul! that debasing and paralizing inertia incident to obscure and resourceless wretchedness."

The aged nobleman contemplated him with looks of interest and benevolence, and then signed to him to resume his task. Some pages had been torn away, and it recommenced rather abruptly.

"I had by this time reached the abbey; that venerable edifice which my infant eyes had so often contemplated as I hung upon a mother's hand, or loitered by her side; that pile which had excited my boyish pride, as I told myself I should one day be its possessor. As I stood contemplating the romantic beauty of the scene, my ear was suddenly caught by the sweet, though still tones of a female voice, singing

the fragment of a ballad familiar to me as my own name: it was the favourite of one who sung it but too well; and what thousand nameless recollections rose to echo every note of that well remembered song. All the reminiscences of a first love came back upon my heart—the arch playfulness—the sweet simplicity—the innocent beauty which formed a bright halo round her memory, now rose before me and banished every other recollection.

"The moon was rolling on through a deep blue cloudless sky, almost equal to that which I had often gazed on in Italy: the whole scene was in accordance with the ideas and memories that rose upon my soul, and yielding to their thrilling influence, I threw myself beneath the deep shade of a cluster of trees, to indulge in a trance of early and loved remembrances.

"In such moments we love the minutiæ of detail, and I went back to the first time I beheld her, seated on the grass in the meadow adjoining her father's house, and playing with her infant brother. Shielded from view by a thick hedge, I had leisure to contemplate them unobserved, and mortal eye never lingered on a fairer vision. The innocent boy and his not less innocent sister, had been worthy of the pencil of some of the greatest of the Italian school; and I remember it struck me as a subject of lamentation, that some of these ever changing beauties could not be snatched and preserved for the eye of future admiration.

"The boy was a perfect Bacchus, his almost ruddy limbs were full and beautifully rounded, his little hand fat and dimpled, his black, laughing eyes, sparkling with the very glee of life, and his bright brown

hair curled in short crisp curls all over his head, and round a face, brown indeed, but enlivened with the rosiest hue of life and beauty. His little joyous laugh made the field ring again, and showed his white teeth (a somewhat new acquisition,) through lips that rivalled the 'red, red rose.'

"His sweet sister gazed on him as though her heart was in her eyes, in fact it had hardly been possible for one with a hundredth part of her susceptibility and affection, to have seen him kicking, crowing, and laughing, as if he was only made to be merry, without intuitively imbibing the spirit that animated him. The smile that played about her beautiful mouth, the light that streamed from her delighted eyes, are those recollections, which we can never know the luxury of imparting, since, though impossible to forget, it is equally impossible to describe them.

"A wreath of blue bells and lilies, neither so pure as the brow and bosom on which they lay, with which she had in playfulness encircled her head, the young rioter had half torn off; and with it brought down her luxuriant hair from the comb which had confined it, and sent it in sweet confusion floating on her shoulders; this feat, to judge by his most obstreperous mirth and antics, gave him no common degree of satisfaction.

"I know not how long I should have stood to gaze on beings, whom the lapse of years, and the inroads of sorrow have still left in all their pristine lustre on my memory, had not the restless boy, with the peering inquisitiveness, which may be remarked in quick intelligent children, caught a glimpse of me, and

fearlessly determining to satisfy himself as to the truth of his bird's eye discovery, posted away with all imaginable haste, half crawling, half jumping, to the place where I stood. I immediately sprung over the hedge, and caught him in my arms. His sister perceiving a stranger advance, rose hastily, and endeavoured to arrange her dress and her disordered hair, while a blush bright as the roseate beam of morning suffused her face.

"In walking home, for I was not wholly unknown to her father, she accepted my arm, and I was almost angry with the rosy rogue whom I held on the other, for interrupting with his sudden springs and starts, the indefinable sensation of languid delight which seemed inclined to steal upon my senses, as I felt the pressure of his sister's arm on mine.

"I resigned my clamorous charge to his delighted father, the moment I reached the house. Ellen withdrew her arm, and we entered.

"The six weeks that I lingered there form that part of my existence in which some of its best and purest sunshine is concentrated. It was a tranced existence, in which I had an exclusive perception of all that was bright and beautiful. I have often thought since, it was not perhaps that every thing around me was in reality so exquisitely lovely, (save *one*, and she was more than tongue can utter or fancy picture,) as that the tone of my heart, and the glow of my imagination, which, in all the vividness and wildness of seventeen, imparted their own melody and hue to every thing around me. However this may be, certain it is that no place, no people, have ever appeared to me what

they were, and if it was a delusion, I would experience it again; it is worth a thousand realities.

"This occasioned the first serious breach at home—the traitor Noel had dogged my steps, had betrayed, had misrepresented every thing.

* * * * * *

"All, all has long past away. I left Lonsdale in all its innocence, in all its beauty, never to see it more. Wild were the pangs that attended my parting; but I speedily lost them in new scenes. Ellen was forgotten. In the riot of excess, or in the less pernicious hour of social hilarity, she was not even regretted; but nevertheless she lay deep in my soul, like a latent principle, which only waits to be properly called forth, to attest its power. Now speaking from the experience of a life probably drawing rapidly to a close, I feel she was the only woman I could have loved with exclusive devotion, and in whom I could have reposed every thought of my soul, every event of my life with unlimited confidence.

* * * * * *

"Many years after, previous to my last and longest exile from England, I sought Lonsdale farm with the design of making the gentle Ellen the sharer of my future pilgrimage; for treachery on the one hand and injustice on the other, had rendered me indifferent, and I resolved to set all authority at defiance. But I sought in vain; they were rearing a proud pile, where the farm once stood. For a moment I was transfixed with astonishment and sorrow, the next I looked around for some one to answer my inquiries. Alas! it was done too soon. The owner of Lonsdale

farm had long been ruined; and a wanderer, his wife, and son were the companions of his melancholy sojourn, and Ellen—was in her grave! Here then was the close of that brilliant dream, that earliest love, so lately revived with all the colouring of ardent hope, and deep-seated passion. The very home of her I loved was rased to its foundation—her kindred scat tered—I was not even left the melancholy consolation of revisiting the scenes she loved—and through which we had wandered together. All was changed—all was fled—and nothing remained of all that hope and passion had once promised and painted—but to weep over the cold grave of Ellen in the last abode of poor human nature—the church-yard.

* * * * * *

"But I was not left long to the stupor of grief; rage, vengeance, indignation, dried up the fountain of my tears. Noel, the perfidious villain, after having torn me from Ellen, by machinations certain though unseen, would have sacrificed my pale young love, my Lonsdale lily to his brutal passion! Foiled in the attempt he ruined her father—and broke her heart—In my first frenzy on learning the news I sought the villian who had made the wreck. He was gone abroad—the fruitlessness of my rage was a sedative, and I now determined to seek the exiled family, and if possible obtain his parents' consent to take their little boy abroad with me—little did I say—alas! for the lapse of time! he must then have been ten years old. Wild and bitter was the remorse with which I thought of my long neglect of Ellen; of all the events of my life, it planted the deepest furrow in my brow, the sorest

pang in my heart. Three years I spent in wandering through England and Scotland, in a vain and fruitless effort to gain some tidings of the ruined family. At last I bade my country, as I then thought, an everlasting farewell.

* * * * *

"At length after four years' wandering, I visited Florence, being at that time devoted to the study of the arts. Very soon after my arrival I was introduced to a family, once as remarkable for wealth, as illustrious by birth; but though considerably reduced, some relics of the embellishments of former days they still possessed; among these were some pictures of uncommon beauty, and to see these my friend took me thither. Having to attend his brother the Earl of Errol, who was on the eve of departure, he left me to employ my time in the picture gallery of the noble house of Vicenzi.

* * * * * *

"Isabelle Vicenzi was the being who came thus chance-directed to the very place where I stood. I had seen beauty in every clime—I had just returned from the *Tribuna* where I had been studying the Statue of the Venus de Medicis. Yet with an eye thus practised, thus accustomed, I stood in voiceless admiration, as her peerless form rose upon my view with what 'eloquence of motion' did she advance!

——'her equal tread's fine impulse,
Fell on my ear like harmony.'*

* In these quotations the author must beg to be forgiven an anachronism.

A being so perfect in beauty, so polished in grace, had never yet met my eye. If my passions were more subdued than when Ellen awakened my heart, my perceptions were more refined, my taste more cultivated, I was more fitted to love and appreciate a being like Isabelle. The difficulty that attended our subsequent meetings, only served to increase our passion. I could not prevail on her to fly—she could not endure the idea of forsaking her father: we found means however to get privately united, and that parent whom she could not forsake, drove her from the protection of his home at a time her situation most demanded tenderness—at a time when I was least able to offer it, being immured within the walls of a prison under some political suspicions. Who can paint the wretchedness of a foreign prison! yet it was all I had to offer my sweet wife, and even that was a privilege obtained with difficulty. I received her with a tenderness and sorrow beyond the power of words to describe. Her fortitude was admirable; she even sustained, or affected to sustain the gaiety of her spirits. She calmed my mind and animated my hopes.

"I was in daily hope of release through the good offices and interest of Sir Reginald Hampton and the Earl his brother, who had most fortunately not left Florence, when Isabelle, whom no persuasion could induce to quit me, gave birth to a son. My anxiety for my liberation was such as almost to endanger my senses. At length, when my child was about two months old, I was summoned to attend the superior powers, as if I were a criminal instead of a wronged and oppressed individual. Isabelle would not be

separated from me—had I been led to death she would have insisted on sharing my fate. Her infant, whose delicate health did not bear such an exposure, was left in the care of a nurse, and we left the prison together under a guard."

Here the manuscript became broken—Heads of the proceedings being given as if with a view to their being filled up on some future occasion. After turning over some pages, Clarence again proceeded.—

"The condition of my quitting Tuscany was the terms on which my liberty was to be granted. I looked at 'my home's sunshine,' my 'bosom's life,' to know how she would bear to leave her loved and native Florence; but I read in her eyes, that I was all to her. She whispered to me with her sweet tones in the expressive language of Ruth, 'Whither thou goest I will go; where thou lodgest I will lodge: thy people shall be my people, and thy God my God.' I listened to her, I gazed on her love-illumined face, and was happy; but never was happiness so soon blasted.

"Some necessary formula, as well as our child, required our return to the prison. Isabelle's first inquiry was for her son; hesitation and disconcertion were visible in the faces of the people of the prison. I grew alarmed, but O! what language can paint the terrors of the mother—of my Isabelle! my blood runs chill as I retrace the scene, though the waves of time's overwhelming ocean have long rolled over it. Our child, our first-born had fallen a victim to neglect, I have sometimes thought design; but in that case they would have chosen some other means of destruction—they would have smothered—have poisoned—not have

burned it. All that remained of what was so lately full of sweet life and infant beauty, was a black and calcined mass. I had had many blows of the heart, but none that for the time unmanned me as did this! After some hours, which it is madness to recal, I bore my almost lifeless Isabelle away—some few hours more, and we were far from Florence. Apprehension for my remaining treasure superseded my sorrow for that which I had lost. At first I feared her anguish would have overwhelmed her reason, but gradually it grew into the grief that found relief in tears. Often at night, when she thought I slept, have I heard her exclaim—

"'My little one! my blooming boy—why did thy mother leave thee! How could she give thy little form to a savage stranger's hands! How could she leave thee to meet a fate so cruel!'

"Time has locked this grief deep in the sanctuary of both our hearts. No other little claimant has appeared to revive the image of our murdered babe, to soothe us for its loss. Why should I seek wealth or honours? a withered, lonely branch, from whom no scion ever is to spring. Cast back upon my native country, like a wreck upon the lonely strand, I am indifferent how the waves of fortune beat against, or whither they may drift me."

The manuscript was again torn and broken, as if it had been merely used as a first draught, and had been afterwards torn up to repage another, and probably a more enlarged memoir, as many notes and references appeared to evince. Clarence was on the point of

resigning the paper to the earl; when a few lines at the bottom of a page caught his eye.

"How singular, how painful and how pleasurable are the meetings that take place in life. Just before I left Dieppe to embark for England, I was one morning lounging in a very melancholy mood, and looking at the shipping and speculating on the changes that might have taken place at home during the years of my absence; when I was attracted by some loud and angry voices. I hastened to the spot, and found an Englishman engaged in a quarrel with some of the natives. He had all the roughness of a man accustomed to a seafaring life, and all the acrimony of one prejudiced against every country on the face of the globe, but his own. With these unconciliating points of character added to a daring courage, much mischief might have ensued but for my interference. When the fray was over I attached myself to my countryman, in order to improve my acquaintance with him. I found him open and communicative, and would have invited him home; but he was on the point of embarking. Finding it so, I turned his way; the conversation naturally turned to England. He told me he was a native of Westmorland—I mentioned Lonsdale—It was his native place—in short he was Richard Wingregin, the brother of my Ellen—my 'first love!'"

Clarence met another name with which he was familiar in that of Wingregin, and with which were associated no common emotions; and with intense interest he continued to read.

"I gazed at him with a curiosity and a mixture

of feeling I can find no language to describe; I reverted to the time when I had first beheld him—he then a baby of two years old, I a boy of seventeen. He was now one and twenty, (though looking infinitely older,) I six and thirty. How short to me appeared the time that had worked these changes! I inquired into his circumstances, for I would have divided my last shilling with him. But he assured me he was tolerably well to do in the world; that he had married the widow of a distant relative of his own name, with whom he had obtained some little fortune, though it was charged with a boy and girl, the fruit of the first marriage. But Richard was of opinion the more the merrier, and seemed inclined to love them as his own. His parents were dead, and his new family were every thing to him. I stayed with him to the last moment, and then we parted, perhaps never to meet again."

The entrance of the Earl's valet reminded him, that some preparation would be necessary for dinner; and his lordship retired, leaving Clarence more inclined to meditate than to follow his example.

It may excite some surprise, that the Earl of Errol should associate with a young man, standing in the situation Clarence did, in the examination of papers of a private, and perhaps important nature. But besides that his lordship had conceived the highest opinion of the qualities of his young secretary's heart and mind, he had formed a plan which he fancied would make the happiness of two estimable and distinguished beings, in whose fate he felt deeply interested. From all he had observed, from all he had gleaned in the

course of the inquiries Seeton Auber had made of him concerning Clarence, he persuaded himself there existed a secret and mutual passion between Miss Belmont and his *protegé*, to which poverty was probably the great obstacle. He generously resolved to remove that barrier, but he also wished, now that he knew Adela, to discover if there was no possibility of reviving some of her father's dormant claims, and thus invest her with some of the goods of this life in a manner more agreeable to her feelings, than any gift could be, however delicately conferred. For this reason he meant to drain every source of information, and to communicate with Mrs. Belmont on the subject.

In availing himself of the intelligent assistance of his secretary, he felt he should only be informing him of circumstances with which he was destined to become acquainted, and in sending him to Mrs. Belmont he should at once give him an opportunity of addressing that lady on the subject of his passion for her daughter, and of serving his cause by the credentials he could exhibit of the earl's confidence and good opinion.

Full of these kind intentions the worthy nobleman sat down to dinner with Adela on one side of him, and Clarence on the other; and often as his kindly heart overflowed with the pleasure resulting from his generous designs, and sanguine anticipations, he addressed them by the title of his children. Some fears he felt from his knowledge of Lord Elmer's views, and the support and countenance they received from his son and daughter; but as all castle-builders have

a very simple method of removing any thing that may arise to obstruct the elevation of a favourite structure, his lordship satisfied his own mind that all would be as he desired, whenever events should have ripened sufficiently for him to appear and crown the happiness of Adela and Clarence.

Adela had descended to dinner pale and dejected; the absence of Secton had rendered her indifferent as to how she appeared, or whether she appeared at all; yet spiritless as she was, she could not be unmoved by the kind and soothing manners of the Earl, and she devoted to him an attention which Clarence had the appearance of sharing, by the continual reference the Earl kept making to him. Indeed, presuming on there being merely a family party assembled, and full of the scheme that employed his thoughts, he kept continually adverting to subjects in a manner somewhat ambiguous, which only Adela and Clarence could understand, and which of course they replied to with promptness and facility. This species of exclusive and confidential intercourse was kept up without any intermission, as the gentlemen rose with the ladies, and accompanied them to the drawing-room.

Caroline who was obliged to assume a certain reserve towards Clarence, and more perhaps since the disclosure of their sentiments than if that disclosure had not taken place, and who was besides closely besieged by Mr. Finley observed all this with much pain and some of the jealousy incident to her nature. She was not sorry therefore when Lord Elmer was announced, and shortly after some of the Benfields and Mortrams. But her situation was little mended, for

though Lord Edward engrossed Miss Belmont, and the Earl had retired in conversation with his son to the further end of the room, Clarence had no opportunity of addressing a word to her, for Mr. Finley never left her for a moment; and in her own defence she took a seat at one of the card tables, in a state of temper that bad cards and a stupid partner could hardly make worse.

While fortune was smiling and frowning by turns upon the gamesters, and Adela was the centre of a little circle, who with some difficulty had contrived to draw her into conversation, the Earl of Errol was investigating the mysterious circumstance of the disappearance of the journal from the library, and the disarrangement of the other papers. Lord Milsom declared his entire ignorance of the matter, and that so far from removing any thing he had not entered the library for some days, having been engaged in business which had confined him much to his private study. In order to investigate so singular an occorence, the gentlemen left the saloon to direct their inquiries to such of the servants as had more particularly the care of those apartments. Nothing however transpired that could throw any light upon the subject. The Journal, and perhaps other papers were gone, but how or for what purpose it was impossible to discover.

The subject was renewed at breakfast the next morning, every body was consulted, every view of the matter taken; but no one could suggest any probable cause for the disappearance of the papers, or hazard a supposition as to who had been the purloiner.

## CHAPTER XXV.

"'There's not a bloody page I will not turn
With burning study, so that I may wreak
Their full collected pangs upon Tredolfo." MATURIN.

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AMONG those who had taken wing from Matlock, and whom it is most essential to pursue, is Lord Egremont, who withdrew himself for the double purpose of facilitating arrangements, and lulling suspicion. He had risen to fortune and power by a long train of petty arts and vices, so that he had grown old in iniquity, and was habituated to the practice of duplicity so much, that he preferred compassing even allowable ends by artifice, rather than by direct and open methods.

After his interest, the next dearest object of his pursuit was pleasure; and it was guided by the same calculating caution, that had insured his fortune: it was at once gross and selfish. Participation made no part of his enjoyment because he was an utter stranger to all generous feeling, all delicacy and refinement. He was a sensualist, not a voluptuary. He knew nothing of the seductive arts by which the latter slopes the way to error, and bewilders the mind in the Elysium of luxury. He had no power of touching the tones of the heart, as the zephyr sweeps the Eolian harp; he had no power to kindle the imagination, as the beams of the sun did the statue of Memnon. His mind and passions were a crude and

arid mass, subjected to some of the rules of interest and necessity, but susceptible of none of the finer and more dangerous impulses of sensibility or taste. Hence all his objects were accomplished by violence, and his chief agent was money.

In his long intercourse with the fashionable world, his manners and conversation had adopted the prevailing etiquette; but it was the hard and bare outline of good breeding, without any of the polish of innate grace, without any of the tints of true politeness. His rank threw around him some of that imposing lustre which it is its nature to confer; he carried it well, and had the tact only to inforce his pretensions, where he saw they would be allowed. He was not disappointed or surprised to find he made no favourable impression on our heroine; though allured by her beauty, and deluded by the flattery of self-love, he had made the attempt. He had seen himself feared, respected, nay, even loved and admired to a certain degree and in a certain manner. But he had never been able to obtain over any one that influence, which acts upon the senses like fascination, and which is the most flattering tribute human homage can pay to human power. This was the want of mind and feeling; deficient in which he had no power of acting on the minds and feelings of others.

His most extravagant compliments, his most marked attentions, had never done more than distress and disconcert the object to whom they were addressed. Adela regarded him with the same cold and momentary attention, and avoided him with the same indifference, as she did an ugly fashion, or an inconvenient

seat; when of necessity obliged to endure either for a time, she summoned her patience to the task, and availed herself of the first opportunity of a change.

He had marked this, but it had no way altered or decreased his desire of possessing her. He saw the futility of endeavouring to assume a power nature had denied him, and he therefore retired more into the back ground, a conduct he saw the policy of adopting, as it regarded Lady Ruthven, whom in the first onset of his design on Adela had been almost forgotten. She was truly a thorn in his side, and he often wondered how he could have so far forgotten the prudence that had marked his systematic career of vice, as to place himself so much in her power as he had done; but it was the effect of superior intellect, it was the effect of the attractive power the great has over the little, especially as there were certain points of character in which they evinced a singular congeniality.

Besides Lady Ruthven was too artful a woman, not to strengthen and confirm her power by seizing on every thing that could command the fears and interests of her paramour. As an able general never engages in a battle without some view to the facility and practicability of escape in case of defeat; so in the first days of their iniquitous union, she possessed herself of every thing that could arm her against desertion or injustice. He had also assisted this accumulation of power in her hands, by occasionally availing himself of her talent.

There is a species of noble villany (if such words may be coupled,) from which we cannot withhold

admiration, nay, even respect. The daring spirit which will attack superior force, which will brave the front of power, stand undaunted on the ridge of danger, though rapine, though murder, be his object, so long as he respects the feelings of the helpless and unhappy—the innocent and unprotected; we view him as a being, who in some measure sanctifies the crime he commits; we believe that under other circumstances he might have been a better man. But he who can trample on the wretch he has overthrown—pour poison into the wound he has himself inflicted, and pour it with a steady hand, and count the drops, is a wretch "without remorse or pity." The first might be the wreck of a proud and noble nature, hurled into the broad sea of vice by the resistless tide of overwhelming fate: the last partakes of the reptile nature of the snake, born to crawl in dust, and sting in secret. Such was Lord Egremont.

His seat in Scotland to which he had retired, for the ostensible purpose of superintending improvements and alterations, previous to the marriage of his daughter, and was destined to be again the theatre of crime. Thither Adela was to be conveyed. There he waited to receive her. First, as deficient in personal courage, he would not risk attending so hazardous an enterprize himself, and secondly, should it miscarry he should remain safe from suspicion, secure that his well-paid emissaries would not betray him, and by that means deprive themselves of his powerful aid, and the harvest of future and similar adventures. His long absence also, and apparent indifference of all the movements of Adela and her connections, would preclude any

idea of his being concerned in her flight, whenever it should take place. Having thus taken every precaution for security and success; he wrote to Lady Ruthven and his daughter, informing them of his intention of remaining in Scotland during the winter, and inviting them (which he knew he might safely do) to join him, or not as they pleased. To his myrmidons he never wrote himself always having one with him who acted as his agent, so that oral evidence was all that could (in the event of any miscarriage) be adduced against him. Through this means he kept up a communication with those whom he had placed in the vicinity of Milsom Park, to watch and inform him of all the movements of Miss Belmont, and at last he received an intimation that she had accompanied the Earl and his family to Richmond for the purpose of spending the Christmas there.

His impatience increased as the accomplishment of his scheme seemed likely to be fulfilled. Instructions the most ample were transmitted to those to whom its execution was entrusted. The night of the masked ball was to be chosen; a carriage and four was to be in attendance; and a letter, importing that her mother lay at the point of death, was at some well-chosen moment to be presented to Adela; and in the first alarm of her feelings, before she had time to consult with any one, she was to be hurried away. Much difficulty he knew would be attendant on the execution of this plan, surrounded as Adela always was; but he knew from experience the skill of those he employed, and the power of the large recompense they would earn for sharpening the wits.

Fresh letters brought fresh hopes, the ball was to take place on Christmas eve—many guests had arrived—and the Earl's mansion promised to be a scene of confusion favourable to their design. Mr. Auber was absent—not expected—Miss Egremont and Lady Ruthven not yet arrived. Miss Belmont would appear in the character of a nun—her health apparently delicate and her spirits bad—some talk of her returning to Wales—relays of horses ordered on the road—and no expense spared that would facilitate secrecy and dispatch. Such were the heads of the last letters that reached his lordship.

He counted the hours as they went by; he ranged through the suit of apartments which he had prepared for the reception of his victim. They were gorgeous with splendour. Gold mouldings set off the richest silk hangings—Persian carpets lined the long vista of magnificent rooms, that glittered with splendid mirrors—costly chandeliers, and noble pictures. The windows overlooked a fine expanse of country, bleak indeed, under the influence of the present ungenial season, but not without its beauties; while the war and sparkling of the distant ocean added grandeur to the whole.

The access to this mansion, venerable from its antiquity, was through a deep dell which wound along the rock on which it was seated. Narrow and sinuous, and clothed with stunted pines and rock herbage, it was in many parts impervious to the sun; several springs formed tiny rivulets, which wound along in silence till, meeting others, they formed a confluence, and fell cascading into a hollow of the rock, from

which they foamed forth again, waking the echoes as they went, and took their course to the sea.

This pass, dark and gloomy in the gayest season of the year, was ten times more so under the rigid reign of winter. The frost-bound waters, had certainly ceased their hoarse and melancholy ravings; but the ...t, now in wild blasts, now in low and dismal ...ings, tore echo from her cave, as the expected carriage made the difficult and dreary pass, and rolled slowly through the sinuosities of the vale.

The torches of the postillions and attendants, gleamed dimly through a dense fog; and it was not till they were in view of the castle that the owner of it was apprised of their approach. A dreadful agitation seized him, and he determined to postpone the meeting till the lovely and unfortunate traveller should be somewhat recruited and composed from the fatigues of her long and fearful journey. Dismissing her servants to attend her, with the strictest charges to show every mark of solicitude and respect, he withdrew to a station from whence he could see Adela alight. He saw the coach door opened, the steps let down; and after a pause that appeared to him an age, she descended, enveloped in a large mantle, the hood of which was drawn over her head. As she entered, she exhibited every mark of languor and fatigue, treading slowly and heavily, and leaning much on those who supported her, as if suffering from extreme exhaustion.

It immediately struck the dark machinator who watched her, that the attack he meditated were best made while her spirits were thus subdued. He there-

fore called for wine, and drank deep to gain the courage that he needed. He also assumed all the insignia of his rank, that his appearance might be in accordance with the splendour and magnificence with which he had surrounded her.

Again he drained the goblet; and taking his cambric handkerchief from the table, descended from his dressing-room. He hesitated; and as he approached the rooms, thought he would defer the meeting till the morning, and in the mean time see his servants and creatures, and learn the particulars of their journey. Yet why should he delay his pleasure?* The first shock would not be less fearful in the morning than now, (he cried, as he passed through an anti-room,) or the effect of the magnificence of the scene less imposing. That last thought was sufficient to decide him, and he passed on.

From the day that he had expected Adela's arrival, the range of apartments had been kept in a style of preparation suited to the reception of guests of the highest order. He lamented that her late habits had so much accustomed her to similar scenes, yet still he hoped that his almost royal magnificence would surprize and dazzle her. Here was all the littleness and barrenness of mind, all the destitution of sensibility and feeling that characterized his soul. At no time was Adela particularly affected by the externals of pomp and grandeur. 'Twas in the vast temple of nature her spirit was touched and elevated:

————When calm night
Hath silenced the still hum of wakeful hours,
And the lone pulses beat, as if it were

The general pulse of nature; when the eye
Of fixed and awe-struck meditation looks
From world to world."

Still less likely was she to be moved by such things now, apprised as she must by this time have been, of the deception that had been practised upon her, and that a fate, fearful though unknown, awaited her.

Inflated with ideas of his own importance; full of triumph in the success of his scheme; and heated with the quantity of wine he had drank, the fumes of which began to mount to his head, he proceeded through the rooms till he reached that in which his innocent victim sat, in a reclining posture, on a couch at a little distance from the fire, with her face buried in her handkerchief, the hand that held it resting on the arm of the sofa, while the other fell listless by her side.

A black dress in the style of the habit of a nun, formed her simple attire; the only ornament of which was the cross and rosary that hung at her side. Lord Egremont smiled as he contrasted her appearance with the scene around her; and a still more sardonic light gleamed in his eyes, as he thought it was not the first time the wearer of the conventual garb had kindled and rewarded an earthly passion.

She did not move on his approach; perhaps her senses had forsaken her. He drew near, softly breathed her name, and took her hand. She slowly raised her drooping and dejected head, looked up, and he beheld—Lady Ruthven.

The slight touch of inebriety which had quickened his lordship's spirits, vanished at this unexpected, this

appalling recognition, and he stepped back in his first surprise, as sober as he who had never tasted ought but the pure beverage of nature's fountain. Pale rage and bitter disappointment followed fast upon the heels of astonishment, all as distinctly marked by Lady Ruthven, as they were felt by her noble friend.

"Nay my lord;" cried she, dissembling her own rage, that she might have the gratification of observing his; and speaking with bitter irony—"let me not fright away your courtesy. You play the gallant well. I wish I had been less prompt in the discovery of myself, since it has deprived me of so much complaisance. Methinks you might bid me welcome, for old friendship's sake."

Bitterly did Lord Egremont curse the precipitancy which had prevented his having communications with those who had attended his unexpected guest; for excepting what she might gather from the evident preparations, and the name by which he had addressed her on entering the saloon, he was ignorant how far she might be acquainted with his designs. Every thing bout her declared that she had by some means or other become informed of them, and meant to thwart them, yet as he had invited her on his first coming down, there might be less in her visit than he feared, and he felt it necessary to observe the utmost caution that he might not betray any thing, of which, in spite of appearances, she might probably be still ignorant. Summoning therefore the presence of mind which had been put to flight, and assuming as disengaged an air as he could, but which ill concealed the real tumult of

his soul, he affected not to feel the irony of her address, as he replied—

"You may remember that it was my first request on making this my winter quarters, that you should enliven it with your society. I hope then you do not doubt that you are a welcome guest?"

"Indeed!" said she, with the same ironical tone she had at first assumed, "Yet I am evidently an unexpected one."

"Did you not yourself refuse my invitation?" replied his lordship, cautiously guarding his own words, as well as watching hers.

"And whom then had you selected as my substitute?" said she, looking round her

"Many," he replied: "I fancy it is not a few these vast apartments will contain; they are suited to be the scene of no humble pageant."

"You have become wondrous hospitable, as well as magnificent, since we parted," she rejoined, sarcastically, "but as you meditate so much festivity, you have perhaps also provided some presiding goddess to be the mistress of the revels?"

"And am I not provided," cried he, endeavouring to force a smile, "since you are come, who are no less mistress here than I am master?"

'Who *should* be mistress here;" exclaimed she, now first rising with an air of majesty that well became her, and which she well knew how to assume, "who *ought* to be mistress here by other rights than those of sufferance? I have no longer patience to bandy words with you, thougn did I but give you rope enough You know the adage. In fine, then, know

to your confusion, I am aware of the whole motive of your sojourn here. Your late dissembling, Egremont, deceived not me. Miss Belmont shall be as much beyond your power, as you are deep in mine.

Lord Egremont saw all further dissembling was useless, and his rage which he had hitherto withheld, began to get the mastery, yet it was not unmixed with fear. He now in his turn borrowed the tones of sarcasm as he replied—

"You have done nobly, if it is for *her* sake you've given yourself this trouble. I knew not Lady Ruthven was so strong in virtue."

"You aim but a recoiling shaft my lord. I preach no penitence, I parade no virtue, but let me tell you none know better how to prize, than those who've lost it. I would purchase back my days of innocence at any price, not on the plea that prudes and puritans uphold it, and preserve it; but because it gave me power—it upheld my pride."

"Pride!" repeated his lordship—

"By that sin fell the angels.'

Lady Ruthven smiled scornfully: none knew better than she did the extent of his lordship's erudition, and she was aware he seldom hazarded a quotation, unless when he wished to fill up an unpleasant hiatus in conversation, or make it diverge into another channel. This however was not to be done on the present occasion; Lady Ruthven came like an experienced archer determined to strike her shaft into a certain mark, and her eye was not to be diverted from the point at which she aimed.

"But though, as you have well reminded me," she resumed, "I boast no claims from virtue; reft of her panoply, by the very one who dares to taunt me with the want; I have other power—less proud but not less potent. I bear the sword of vengeance, and I will wield it with no coward hand. Is your lordship armed so strong in conscious innocence as to disregard my threats?"

"I have too much faith in the attachment which has long made our interests one," he replied, endeavouring to soften her. "Besides you may deceive yourself as to the extent of power you possess; however strong the conviction which we feel, we may not be always able to impart that conviction to others."

"Doubt not my power, nor my will to use it," rejoined she. "The first is strong as your worst fears could picture, the latter as my wrongs, my injuries, could make it."

"Remember," he cried a little staggered by the manner in which she delivered the last words; "remember that if I fall, I fall not alone; the blind fury that drags me down, will involve itself in the same ruin."

"Be it so," she cried; "like Samson, I shall not seize the pillars with less force for that anticipation. I came hither to convince myself that all was as I feared, that you were the traitor, the apostate that I find you. I would leave no 'loop to hang a doubt upon.' Being thus certain, my path is chosen—when next you hear of me, trust me my name will not come upon your ear, coupled with the wail of sorrow, the

moanings of complaint, the appeal of penitence or dependence; neither with the joyousness of revelry, or the homage of applause—far different—far otherwise —it shall come in blasts of dire denunciation."

She rung the bell, and desiring the servant who answered the summons to send the housekeeper Mrs. Margaret Thorpe to attend her, she quitted the room. This movement Lord Egremont did not attempt to impede; he paced up and down with the irregular step of one whose mind was torn and harassed. Taken as he was by surprise, he was in no mood to meet Lady Ruthven's rage with the subtleties of which he was usually master; neither had he sufficient command of his temper to soothe her with penitence or promises.

Soon after her ladyship withdrew, he retired to his dressing-room, and desired to have Oswald (the person to whom he had entrusted the conduct of the affair which had had so singular a termination) sent to him, and he resumed the same pacing that he had exhibited in the saloon, only more heavily and rapidly, and accompanied with violent starts and stamps. He was at length interrupted by the entrance of the domestic, to inform him that Oswald was not among the persons who had attended the lady."

"How!" exclaimed his lordship furiously. "Oswald not here, who then was he that attended the carriage on horseback?"

"Crosbie, my lord," was the rejoinder.

"Send him hither instantly."

"My lord, deeming there would be no call for his

attendance, and being sorely wearied, he has within this hour gone to rest, and is doubtless by this time in that sleep of which he hath such need."

"Let him be waked then, and see that he attend me with all speed," exclaimed his lordship. "Haste dotard," he impatiently ejaculated with a corresponding gesture, as the old man retired, as if unwilling to do his bidding.

The defalcation of Oswald was a blow for which Lord Egremont was wholly unprepared. His absence at this juncture looked portentous; and coupled with the substitution of Lady Ruthven for Adela, it looked very like a junction between him and that lady. Such being the case, his peril was indeed imminent: for Oswald was the repository of the most fearful secret, and in the hands of that enraged and talented woman might be made the instrument of his destruction.

All his views on the subject were at once changed. Oswald must be won back, if he had quitted his allegiance, and she, so far from being defied, must be conciliated, even at the price of fulfilling the pledges he had once given her, and making her his wife.

When Crosbie at length attended the unwelcome summons, he found Lord Egremont pale as spectral fear, with an eye of haggard wildness; while the wearied and newly awakened man exhibited an appearance still more sepulchral, wanting the intelligence of eye that animated the visage of his master.

Lord Egremont threw himself into an arm chair, and pointing to a seat immediately opposite to him, sternly desired Crosbie to take it and go through a

circumstantial detail of the progress of the journey and every thing that had occurred on the road, from their quitting Richmond to their arrival at their destination.

Without following the somewhat circumlocutory account of the attendant, which was frequently interrupted by the irascible and anxious auditor, it must be briefly stated that Peter Oswald had in person attended the lady to the carriage on the night of Christmas-eve, and, having previously given Crosbie all necessary instructions, rode on fleetly in advance. They saw nothing more of him till their arrival at the end of the first stage, when he assisted the lady to alight, who, throughout the journey, kept herself closely muffled, and avoided speaking or holding intercourse with any one.

"Save Oswald?" cried Lord Egremont interrogatively. "Was he much in attendance on the lady?"

"He always preceded us to the successive stages, had every necessary accommodation ready, and was always at hand to assist her alighting and returning to the carriage; but further seemed to hold no communication, nor did I hear her address a word to him, any more than to any one else, duing the whole of the journey.

A hope gleamed across Lord Egremont's mind that Oswald might yet make his appearance; although it was certain, acquainted as he was with all the circumstances, and knowing Lady Ruthven as he had done for years, he could not have conducted her to Scotland by mistake: it must have been a plot to which he was privy, and at which he connived. Still was

the criminal Lord Egremont willing to receive any apology he might offer, willing to appear to trust any falsehood he might invent, rather than run the risk of breaking with his dangerous ally. Oswald in addition to other power, had that of wealth, he had grown rich in his lordship's service, and was besides the recent inheritor of the fortune of a distant relative, of which many and unlooked-for deaths had left him the heir. Thus his guilty employer, while he had every thing to fear, had but little to hope from him.

Never was the light of morning more welcome to the sick man's couch who had counted the weary watches of the night, than to the sleepless eyes of Lord Egremont; the tedious hours had been spent in retracing the past, the fearful past, which *would* intrude itself upon his soul, and in revolving what was expedient as to the future. In the morning Crosbie was again summoned, but nothing more than he had already stated could be elicited; he was dismissed. The hours passed anxiously with Lord Egremont, till propriety permitted a message being sent to Lady Ruthven, importing that his lordship desired a few moments' conversation. The reply that she felt herself too much indisposed, convinced him of the hostile tone of feeling she was adopting towards him. Some successive attempts were equally unavailing, and at length he sat down to write to her, an alternative he ever avoided as long as he could. Fear was in the spirit, caution in the wording of the scroll, and as he sealed it, the thought that her ambition would triumph over her revenge, and that she would prefer gratifying the first by becoming his wife, rather than

the latter in being his foe, animated him with hope. An hour elapsed, and he received a reply, that at once dissipated the flattering illusion, and told him that vengeance was dearer to his outraged mistress, than honour and distinction. Every epithet that a wrathful woman could imagine, was liberally bestowed on him. A portraiture of himself was sketched with a bold and skilful hand, so dark, and yet so like that he started as from a mirror that reflected him with hideous fidelity—the charges of forgery and murder were reiterated with the boldness, the pertinacity of one who could support assertion by proof, and who would bring that proof forward, though she tore her heart-strings asunder in the effort. As he read the vindictive scroll, her look, her last words came back in all their force upon his memory; and as he closed it with the signature, he threw it from him, exclaiming—

"Yes! her name *has* come coupled with dire denunciation!"

The approach of footsteps made him start, and darting forward he grasped the letter he had just thrown by with a convulsion of terror, an agony of guilty fear. He expected as the door opened to behold the queenly form of his obdurate mistress, and he cowered at the bare idea, but to his relief it was only his valet. He started, appalled at the appearance of his master, in whose countenance was legible the fearful conflict that had now for so many hours torn his mind.

"Well!" exclaimed his lordship impatiently, and endeavouring to seem composed, "what brings you here uncalled!"

The servant presented letters, which had just arrived by express, and bowing to the waving dismissal of his lordship's hand retired. The first of which he broke the seal was from his daughter, communicating the intelligence of the sudden death of her aunt Mrs. Saugrober, and earnestly intreating his immediate presence at Woburn: the others were from the Captain and Mr. Auber.

The demon interest was instantly alive in his heart, even in the midst of apprehensions of the worst kind. The probable disposition of Mrs. Saugrober's property occupied all his thoughts, and not the dead woman; but her existing will determined him to leave Scotland immediately. With the promptness which always distinguishes a man of business he prepared for his journey; yet when all the arrangements were completed, the thought of the fair foe he was leaving behind him, again disturbed the calculating current of his reflections. In her present humour, supplication would in all probability only serve to strengthen her obduracy, perhaps neglect and disregard might effect his purpose better; at all events it was the only alternative the present exigency allowed him, and trusting to the arts and chances that had hitherto befriended him, he threw himself into his travelling carriage, and bade adieu to the scene of many vices, and of much recent mental agony and bitter disappointment.

## CHAPTER XXV.

"Tell us ye dead—
Will none of ye in pity reveal the secret,
What 'tis ye are and we must shortly be?
A little time, will make us wise as ye are,
And as close."

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The disappearance of Lady Ruthven from Richmond on the night of the masquerade, caused no surprise, since she had left a letter for the Earl intimating that important business called her suddenly, and imperatively into Scotland, and intreating him to make her adieus to her friends, particularly those of his own circle; but to our heroine, following as it did on a conversation she had recently held with the fair fugitive, it was matter of mystery and speculation.

Strange conjectures were traversing her brain, like shadows rendered still more dim and uncertain, by moving in a mist, when the news of Mrs. Saugrober's death reached Richmond. Such an event, even when overtaking, as in this instance, the aged, the unamiable, and the unloved, is not without its effect on every mind of common feeling and reflection. Every death we hear of, seems to set up another milestone on the high-road to eternity, and point to us the path we must all traverse.

Adela shared in the common shock, but regardin the deceased with few recollections of interest an

none of admiration or affection, other feelings in close connection with the event rapidly took possession of her mind. The only obstacle to Miss Egremont's immediate union with Mr. Auber was now removed. The wishes of the deceased, and the necessary ceremonials and mourning, might operate to retard it to the period originally assigned; but opposed to this supposition was the impatience of many of the parties for the event, the indifference of the Egremonts on all points of feeling, and the very brief term of fashionable sables. Those who

> "—bear about the mockery of woe,
> To midnight dances and the public show,"

would not be the people to suffer it to interfere with an event so important to the happiness of an heiress.

No one as yet expressed an opinion: but it was a general expectation that a month, or six weeks, would see the distribution of bridal favours, with all the usual eclat of a magnificent wedding, unless the old lady's will should be found to contain a restricting clause.

Adela asked herself, had she not better take refuge in the bosom of her fond mother, ere their marriage bells should ring her knell. Alas! when we pause to ask ourselves a question, instead of acting instantly on what it suggests, it is clear we want some excuse for a negative. Though all hope was fast drawing to a close, like a moth she still fluttered round the flame that threatened her with destruction. Neither the assiduities of Lord Elmer, who, though repulsed, still hung about her; nor the cravings of filial love, which

often yearned towards her mother, could drive or seduce her from the circle, where she could hear him mentioned and receive his letters—letters which she knew maternal caution would interdict—letters which she blushed when she received, and wept while she read.

She was sitting one evening with Lady Milsom, Caroline, and Mr. Finley, when a stranger was announced as desiring to speak with the latter. Too happy to feel at all inclined to quit the circle of loveliness by which he was surrounded, he asked permission to have him introduced? It was of course acceded, and the person entered.

"What Crawford!" exclaimed Oscar as he recognized his brother's steward, "what brings you from 'wave-girdled Erin?'"

The aged Crawford, whose ruddy face attested how well he wore his years, muttered something about wishing to speak to his young master in private.

"If it is not treason out with it at once," cried the young and high-spirited Finley.

"Then," replied the old man bowing, "then my lord, I have the honour to inform your lordship you are now Lord Rutledge."

"Heavens!" exclaimed Oscar, starting from his seat, "Is my brother dead?" but overcome by emotion, and still far from convalescent, he sunk into it again. Lady Milsom hastened to him, while Caroline rung the bell for a glass of water. He rejected it, but availed himself of the servant's assistance to leave the room followed by the steward.

During his stay at Matlock, his father the old Lord

Rutledge died, but the knowledge of an event so melancholy was withheld from regard to the delicate state of his health. He had however been informed of it just before leaving Derbyshire, and though mourning him as a son, he could not but remember he had fallen full of years: he was not gathered into the harvest before his time; but the young lord was in the prime of life, and his loss was a shock the more severe as it was unexpected. Oscar had been little with his brother, yet he was not wanting in feelings of fraternal affection, and when he appeared the next morning, his countenance bore evidence of the deep melancholy that weighed upon his heart.

He announced the necessity of an immediate visit to the sister kingdom, but observed that his return should be as speedy as circumstances would admit. In bidding farewell his feelings overpowered him, and his full blue eyes glistened with a tear he would not suffer to fall. He lingered as he took the hand of Caroline, as if to speak, but words, or the power to utter them, seemed denied; and silently pressing her hand to his lips, he withdrew.

The sympathy of every one went with him, and an answering tear filled more than one pair of the bright eyes he left in the breakfast room. Lord Milsom attended him the first few miles of his journey, and did not return till the dinner hour, and was then accompanied by Lord Egremont, who, the moment Mrs. Saugrober's funeral had taken place, hastened to pay his *devoirs* to his friends at Richmond.

Adela met him with a strange mixture of feeling: individually, he excited an emotion of dislike, but he

came newly from the vicinity of Seeton Auber, and that circumstance invested him with an interest, threw a sacred halo round him, and furnished him with a spell of such powerful attraction that he was astonished at the ease with which he engrossed her to himself. She hung upon his words in the hope of hearing the name she loved drop from his lips, and though repeatedly disappointed she turned to him again with new expectation and unwearied attention the moment he resumed speaking.

Lord Egremont came back into the circle a different man to what he had left it: almost every one felt there was a change yet no one could tell in what it consisted. In fact late events had produced a powerful effect on his mind, and notwithstanding every effort it communicated itself to his spirits and behaviour. Oswald and Lady Ruthven were the scarecrows of his peace: the very suspense in which he existed with regard to them was worse than actual evil; their power hung over his head, like the sword of Damocles suspended by a hair. He had also experienced a dreadful disappointment in regard to the property of Mrs. Saugrober. No will had yet been discovered, and in the event of no such document appearing, the wealth that he had long accustomed himself to look upon as his daughter's would pass to the broad-built relations of her Dutch husband. What added to the certainty of their rights being brought forward and enforced, was that Mr. Bolton of Threadneedle Street was their agent, and had also some collateral interest in the business These were circumstances not likely to sit lightly on a mind op-

pressed with the consciousness of guilt, and devoted to views of interest: they were ever present to his thoughts, and running in parallel lines with all his views of the future, (his fears acting like cramp-irons to bind them together,) they naturally disarranged the composure and equanimity of his demeanour.

Two days spent at Richmond however acted favourably on his spirits, and threw some of the powerful ingredients of hoped-for pleasure and expected triumph into his anticipations. He began to entertain greater hopes than ever with regard to Adela; and this tone of feeling insensibly touched other objects, and softened some of the appaling shadows with which they deepened his terrors. Looking back on the past, in order to enable himself to form a judgment of the future, the analogy taught him to lessen his fears. Why should the good fortune which had attended former schemes, and defeated former foes, forsake him now? and with a flickering belief that he was born under a lucky planet, he in a measure succeeded in "laying the flattering unction to his soul."

At his departure he pressed the party to return with him to Woburn; and though unable to succeed then, he would not depart till he obtained a promise that they would make him an early visit. Adela listened to the arrangements, and heard herself included in them with trembling delight and undefinable apprehension; but pleasure was the predominating feeling, and she received Lord Egremont's compliments on the hope, on the happiness of seeing her in his own house, with a flattering attention, and an evident tone of gay and joyous feeling which increased

the intoxication and the delusions of hope, which had already taken possession of his lordship's mind.

Woburn at this time presented a scene sufficiently dull, particularly to Seeton Auber, who harassed by counsel from his father, and caprices from his mistress, found the path of duty to which he was restricting and endeavouring to habituate himself, a hard and irksome one.

His best enjoyment consisted in wandering through the extensive grounds belonging to the mansion, while thoughts that would not be restrained, hovered around the Beauty of the British Alps, (as he had called Adela when he first beheld her,) and he wished himself a Welsh farmer, or rather a man of small independent fortune, with so much concern in agricultural pursuits, as would tend to health and pleasure; then with the "few he liked, the *one* he loved," he would look down on the sons of gaiety and grandeur with pity; for he had proved how little the tinseled toys of the world, can repay the heart for the privations it often endures for the world's sake.

Sometimes he visited the hermitage, a rustic building situated in the park, and hid in embowering shades, which was the residence of an old catholic priest, known by the name of Father Francis. Thither he would repair to talk philosophy, for the father was a man of learning and intelligence, and though long secluded from society, was as well read in mankind as in books. His remarks were shrewd and original, exhibiting either long intercourse with the world, or gerat observation during such time as he had past in it.

On the day after Lord Egremont's departure for

Richmond, Seeton had towards its close sought the sequestered abode of the priest. The spare figure of the old man was bent over the fire, the red light of which fell on his meagre but intelligent visage. Seeton entered, saying—

"I am come to take counsel with thee, father."

"Be seated then, my son," replied the priest, rising and kindling his lamp.

"What has been the subject of your meditations this evening?" asked Seeton, as he drew near the fire.

"Death!" replied the hermit; and laying his hand on the large clasped volume which lay open before him, he solemnly added—

"In the midst of life we are in death."

"True!" cried his young companion, in a tòne of corresponding seriousness; "yet with such a conviction, we are ever acting as if we were immortal; and it is only when the lesson comes home to the heart, in the privation of some being whose fate has been interwoven with our own, that we really pause to think upon the subject."

"And that is not for long:" said the sage.

"No!" resumed Seeton, "'tis a moment of melancholy, and past. Even the warnings of illness do not lessen our confidence in life; and when tottering on the brink of the grave, we still flatter ourselves there is more sand in the glass." As he spoke, he took the hour-glass that stood on the table, in his hand.—

"How wise and how necessary then that ordination," said father Francis, "which takes place in the death of friends, which, by continually awakening us to

a sense of the uncertainty of life, and all we prize in it serves to shake our love for a world we are so sure and so unwilling to quit. As one by one the props of existence are withdrawn, we learn to look with mitigated apprehension on the approaching scene of final dissolution—we drop more easily into the tomb, the less we have to cling to here. What is taken from *this* world, is added to the *next*. The hopes that perish here, we trust will re-blossom beyond the grave; and for those for whom we once wished to live, we at length desire to die."

The graceful and impressive solemnity with which he spoke, struck Seeton with admiration; but a deeper feeling touched him, as the old man rested his elbow on the table, shading his eyes with his hand; and he fancied he saw a tear drop on the book over which he leaned.

"Have you known much of the bitterness of mourning?" cried father Francis, recovering himself.

"Thank heaven I have not:" replied Seeton.

"Never mourned for one whom you had dealt unkindly by?" again inquired the father.

And again Seeton answered in the negative.

"Then pray to heaven you never may," resumed the priest, "for it is the bitterest mourning of all."

"Yes!" observed the young man, "because it is one of the properties of death, to throw the faults of the departed into the shade, and revivify with a brilliancy they rarely boast in life, all the superior qualities of their nature; it also cancels the recollection of slights and injuries received, but renews and exaggerates such as mav have been inflicted."

"'Tis just so:" said the father, in the tone of one whom experience had convinced of the truth of the remark. "It is then we truly and properly estimate the value of those things which created disagreement and disunion, and learn how lightly that weighs in the balance of eternity, which preponderated in the scales of time. Who, that retraces past life, and departed friends, but must feel how unwise it is to abridge the brief period of life of any of its moments of social happiness, by taking up questions only important from the consequence falsely attached to them; and even where they want the plea of futility, do we not bitterly lament, since the period was so short, that we had not, by a generous concession, left ourselves the consoling reflection of having been the only sufferers?"

"Unfortunately," answered his auditor, "it is from individual experience alone that we really derive benefit; precept and example appear equally vain, however striking and however frequent."

"Review life," cried the hermit after a pause, "not even with the severity of the rigid moralist, and ascetic misanthrope, or bigot; review it merely by the aid of common sense and common feeling, and is it worth half the pain and trouble that it costs? Do we not aggravate trifles into serious evils; create fancied misfortunes for ourselves, when we might be much better employed in mitigating the real ones of others? And when death comes at last—that grand vacuum in which all fall alike, how large is the sum of vain regrets, and fruitless lamentations left to the survivor! It is then, and then only that we learn the truth.

which, though offered by many, we have obstinately refused, till forced upon us by the hand of experience; and we add our names with a sigh to the long list of those who have been wise too late. This volume," he continued, taking up the New Testament, "teaches not only the path to heaven, but that of peace and happiness on earth. Study its precepts, and in proportion as you depart from or follow them, will you be miserable or happy, even here."

A knocking at the door interrupted the exhortation, which had otherwise perhaps been lengthy, as the subject was important. The intruder was bid to enter, and Peter Oswald appeared. He darted a look at Mr. Auber, which evidently bespoke a desire for his absence, which was quickly understood and complied with, as the latter almost immediately rose and bade the father good night; and with a distant acknowledgment to Oswald, to whom he was a stranger, he withdrew.

Impressed with the tone the conversation of the evening had taken, Seeton gave himself up to the most serious reflection. The strict line of unalleviated duty which was to mark his future path, formed no inconsiderable and no pleasant part of his meditation. Scarcely knowing where he went, he wandered into the town.

In the mood in which he paced along, few were the circumstances that were likely to arrest his notice; but the cry of suffering and distress, will penetrate to the most abstracted mind, and awaken the interest of the most occupied heart. Such were the sounds which recalled Seeton to himself, just as he was passing one

of a line of humble habitations. He paused to convince himself that he heard aright, and again the tones of a female voice, in accents of supplication, met his ear. Without waiting to decide on the propriety of his interference, he knocked loudly at the door, which being very promptly opened, he was saluted with a blow, very emphatically and very silently bestowed. He was on the point of making a suitable reply, when a voice, which however coarse, he distinguished to be a woman's, exclaimed in a drawling tone, half malice, half derision—

"And you're come at last, you lazy luggard, are ye? take off your shoes, and mind how you bring your hoofs into the house, which I can neather get claned, nor kape clane."

"Woman!" sternly exclaimed Mr. Auber, "you are either drunk or mad."

"Oh! and what have I done!" she ejaculated, and screaming to some one within, added, "Judy, bring a light."

A dirty, miserable looking object, with eyes swollen as if from recent weeping, timidly advanced with a candle in her hand, and now first introduced Mr. Auber and Mrs. Laggon to each other, whom the darkness of the night had hitherto mutually shrouded from view. The effect was almost equally great on both parties, though arising from very different causes. On her part it was awe and surprise at beholding a personage of Mr. Auber's bearing and appearance at her door, mixed with confusion and dismay at the manner in which she had, under a mistake, conducted herself to-

wards him; while he read, with astonishment, the traces of ungoverned passion, and implacable revenge stamp the demon on a countenance, which, animated by a gentler spirit, had not been plain. The moment the light appeared, he advanced, and Mrs. Laggon stepped back with an air of abject deference, but which was the mere outwork of manner, behind which skulked a wild and fearful curiosity, as to the motive and the result of the visit.

"I heard cries of such acute distress just now, that it induced my knocking at your door," cried Mr. Auber, addressing the mistress of the little mansion, and looking from her to the miserable attendant who still stood holding the light; "and since I have gone so far, I should like to know in what they originated."

"Indade, sir, it was a disgrace to any house to have such a noise brewing at this time o'night; and I dare say you think what a mane, vulgar crature I am, to have such a botheration, and what a mane vulgar hole it is I live in; but I've been well to do in the world, and that not longer ago than a few months, when I kept a house in Lunnun; but thanks to my eldest son, bad luck to him, whom I mistook you for, (for that's jist the bother he makes at the door in his consequence,) I was turned out of house and home, and here I am in this dungeon; why I'd a better place for my pigs in Ireland."

"All this," replied Mr. Auber, as soon as he could get an opportunity of speaking, "is not replying to my question; some one was here just now undergoing very hard usage."

"Hard usage!" repeated Mrs. Laggon, with a sneer, "You're not to think we're killing a pig, because you hear it squeak."

"But it was not a pig that I heard; it was a human being, and one of your own sex too. There was intreaty and expostulation in the tones; and I found they moved little pity, or I should not have interfered. You were the victim of that violence, I apprehend?" he continued, turning with looks of compassion to Margaret, who only replied by bursting into tears.

"That's right!" cried her enfuriated mistress, with difficulty smothering her rage, "snivel away, do, and pretind how badly you're trated. Indade, I was only corricting her, as I would do my own child, when you heard her making all that hullabulloo. Get into the kitchen now Judy, and clane yourself, there's my girl," continued she, suddenly dropping her voice to a tone of conciliation; "and when you've had your supper, and a night's rest, I hope you'll wake in the morning the better for what I've done for your good."

Margaret hesitated, as if wishing yet wanting courage to address him who had so unexpectedly appeared as her protector. Oppressed by the consciousness of the deforming disadvantages under which she laboured, and awed by his superiority, (notwithstanding the genial benevolence that beamed about him, and invited appeal,) she was preparing to obey her mistress, when he bade her stay. He had read in the looks that darted from beneath the shagged brambly eyebrows of Mrs. Laggon, a contradiction to the kindness her voice affected to assume, and with that intuitive perception which was partly innate, and partly the result

of the peculiar position of the parties before him, he saw that she was a bad remorseless woman, capable of any deed of violence and malignity; and her domestic, a destitute and unprotected being, thrown by circumstances into her power, and left wholly at her mercy.

"In what relation do you stand to this woman?" inquired Mr. Auber, addressing Margaret.

"She's nothing but my sarvant," interrupted Mrs. Laggon, who seemed to fear the poor girl's opening her mouth, "and I am her mistress, sir, whom you call the woman. Woman indade! and what else was the mother that bore you?"

"Since you have taken upon yourself to answer my inquiry," rejoined Seeton, coolly, "I will make another. Do you know that you are amenable to the laws of the country for the violence you have committed on that poor creature, and that they can at once protect her and punish you?"

"Indade I'm obliged to you, sir, for instructing my ignorance," she replied in a tone of suppressed irony; "but I'll engage if it were to come to that, the law would find reason to punish her, and protect me."

The unfortunate domestic again burst into tears, exclaiming, "O do not bely me!"

"The devil choke you! and what do you mean by that? bely you! and what for should I bely? I'll engage the more truth I spake of you, the warse it'll be for ye:" and she nodded her head over her shoulder to the weeping girl, with looks that darted venom."

"Compose yourself," cried Mr. Auber, who grew every moment more interested in the fate of the un

fortunate; "you shall have justice; and, if innocent, protection and support."

"Oh! I'll engage she'll not refuse aether from you, sir; and she's a clane and comely crature to take such a liking for," observed Mrs. Laggon, while a 'laughing devil' kindled in her eye.

"Peace!" ejaculated Seeton, with marked disgust: "and tell me of what do you accuse this unfortunate being."

"Och! now and do you think I'd harm a hair of her head? No, Judy knows its my timpir and not my heart that's in fault; I'll engage she'd sooner have hard words from me, than soft ones from another, for she knows I'm her friend at bottom."

Seeton saw Mrs. Laggon was inclined to double; and to cut the matter short, he once more turned to the girl, saying—

"Is it choice or necessity keeps you in your present situation?"

"Oh sir! necessity."

"And you would gladly, were it in your power, embrace another?"

"Any other that was honest."

"And bad luck to you!" interrupted her enraged mistress, "Do you expect that I'll give ye a character, you dust-heap? I'm willing to kape ye, and overlook your faults, because I trust that God will put it in your heart to mend; but if you leave me, I'll take care that every body knows what ye are."

"And what is she?" cried Seeton: "Again I repeat the question, of what is it you accuse her?"

"Well then, sence you will make bad warse, and

the ungrateful drab deserves no better, I'll just tell what she is—and that is a thafe!"

Margaret, as if gaining courage from desperation, threw herself at Mr. Auber's feet, and with an eloquence of voice and gesture which nature teaches, fervently exclaimed—

"Oh! do not believe it. I am poor, and I am friendless; in the wide world there is not that place where I could seek a shelter, or claim a crust; but I am honest, believe me sir I am.'

"I *do* believe you," cried Secton, raising her; "be comforted, and be assured heaven will protect you." Then turning to Mrs. Laggon, who stood with her arms folded, and beating time with her foot, he said—

"On what do you ground your charge against this young woman?"

"Och! indade, and I've charges enough, and she knows it. She's broke me more things than her whole beggarly generation were ever worth. And all the wages, and fadeing, and clothes she's had of me, has been a dead robbery, for devil's the bit of dacent work she ever did in her life."

"But all this does not amount to dishonesty," observed Secton, whose patience became somewhat exhausted; "you cannot positively say that she ever appropriated any article with a view of defrauding you of it?"

"Indade I can tnough. She has at this moment a cambric handkerchief in her possession, and has had it for months; and it was only to-day I've discivired it, and she's the impudence to tell me she'll never give it up."

"Is this true?" asked Mr. Auber, as a shade of sorrow and distrust blended in the looks he bent on Margaret.

"I will tell you the history of that handkerchief, sir," cried the accused, with the firmness of one conscious of the power of self-vindication; "it belongs to a young lady who left it by accident at my mistress's house in London; with that handkerchief, sir, she wiped from her eyes tears of compassion for me; and when I found it, I resolved if I never had an opportunity of restoring it to its owner, to preserve it for ever in remembrance of her. That opportunity never occurred; though she called afterwards, I had no means of seeing her in order to return it, and in consequence I have kept it ever since."

Seeton thought of Sterne's Maria, and the handkerchief she had washed in her tears and dried in her bosom; and this trait of sensibility in Margaret, gave her additional interest in his heart.

"I can feel and understand the motive upon which you acted," cried Seeton; "but it is one that would not be recognised in the world, nor would it excuse the act; unable to make the restitution yourself, you should have delegated the task to your mistress, whose friend the lady was."

"Och to be sure, this is a mighty fine sounding story, of which sir I belave not a word; the handkerchief is mine, and I'll engage I could produce more than a dozen that are fellows to it. If it was the lady's, as you pretind, ye might have given it to Mr. Clarence," cried Mrs. Laggon, with a nod of triumph.

"Clarence!" repeated Mr. Auber.

"Yes, sir," rejoined she, as if willing to lead from the point in debate, or confuse it with other circumstances; "he was a young man that lodged in my house in Lunnun, a painter by profession, and a Frenchman by birth; a poor, mane, melancholy-looking crature, and yet he was comely too; and sorry enough I was after I had taken him, for I belave he was at times as bare of money as a plucked pigeon is of feathers; however, that was an unlucky room, and so I let him stay."

"He paid you for it," cried Margaret; as if endued with a courage in defence of another, however she might want it for herself.

"And did I say he did not?" sharply retorted her mistress; "but how much? I'll engage that he was as much attinded as if he'd been a prince; many's the bitter word and hard blow he caused; for want you when I would, ye were always readying Mr. Clarence's place, or doing something or other besides *my* work; and I wish I'd done what I often threatened, and turned ye into the streets, and you'd have seen whether he or the fine young lady you spake of would have hilt out a helping hand to ye.'

"I should have little fear," cried Margaret, "nor would I ask a better fate than to serve that young lady all the days of my life; for if there is an angel out of heaven it is she."

"Perhaps I might assist you in finding her;" cried Mr. Auber, whom other interests than those of compassion now began to agitate. "What was the lady' name?"

"Oh sir! I do not know, but her handkerchief, God

bless her, is marked A. B.; and that might convince you ma'am," she continued, turning to Mrs. Laggon, "that the handkerchief is not yours."

Seeton heard not the reply: the conviction that the lady was Adela Belmont, and that Clarence was the individual to whom, when in town, she paid those mysterious visits, which had once excited his own surprise, and occasioned whispers which reached him from other quarters, took entire possession of his soul. But he was above availing himself of the means of information now presented him.

"I will speak of you," at length he said, rousing himself from the reverie into which he had been plunged, "to a very worthy woman, the housekeeper of Lord Egremont. Wait upon her to-morrow evening. You of course know his lordship's mansion, about two miles hence. Use my name," he continued, giving her a card, "and she will see you immediately. Then," addressing Mrs. Laggon, "you will, I trust, have the good feeling not to impede this poor girl's endeavours to better her condition; if you persist in persecuting her, I will have the affair so investigated, as shall at once establish that of which I am already convinced—her innocence, and draw down on yourself the punishment you merit."

He was passing on towards the door, when Mrs. Laggon put her apron to her eye, to wipe or seem to wipe away a tear, as she interrupted his departure.

"Och sir! what shall I say? ye'll condemn me as a mane base woman, though all I did was for Judy's (Margaret I should say) for Margaret's good. I did'nt know who your honour might be, and she's a poor

fatherless and motherless girl. Och that I should strike my Lord Egremont's son! Och that my hand had dropped off before I gave that unlucky blow! Och, sir, your honor, my lord, I hope you're not offinded! I hope you'll pardon my ignorance, and excuse it on the account of passion. Och! Och! that things shou'd fall so."

She had by this time worked herself into a torrent of tears. Mr. Auber coldly assured her that her error was pardoned, bade Margaret good night, and departed.

"Now Judy, my heart!" cried she, addressing the poor girl, as soon as the door was closed on her protector, "I have brought you good luck at last. I'll go with ye to the housekeeper's to-morrow, and you shall have my new cloak on and every thing to make ye look respictable; and never trust me, but I'll spake a good word for ye; I've a bad timper, but I've a good heart in the main, and that's true for me. Ah! now Judy you know it is! and ye'll not forgit me and poor Robert Laggon, when you're in the great lord's kitchen. Many's the dainty bit there you'll see cast to the dogs, bad luck to them. And I'll come and see you sometimes, Judy, Margaret I mane; it'll look well to have a respictable body belonging to you. Och! and Pat M'Cormac used to say, I was a fine portly woman, and that's not seven years ago; and who knows, but that you may have to dance at my next wedding soon. Come, come, and have your supper now along wi' me, before the boys come back, and we'll have a drop of whiskey, to make us forget what's gone by, and to make merry on what's to come."

## CHAPTER XXVI.

"Love has chased sleep from my enthralled eyes
And made me watchers of my own heart's sorrow.
Oh! gentle Protheus, Love's a mighty lord,
And hath so humbled me, that I confess
There is no woe to his correction;
Nor to his service, any joy on earth.
SHAKESPEARE.

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THE next morning, during breakfast, Mr. Auber detailed the outlines of the event of the preceding evening to Miss Egremont and the Captain, and then ringing the bell, desired the housekeeper to step up stairs for a moment.

"Mrs. Wells," he cried, as the guardian of the storeroom entered, "a young person will be here this evening, whom I have your lady's permission," waving his hand towards Miss Egremont, "to beg you will make room for, in any department of the establishment for which you may think her fitted. She is an orphan, and friendless; I think, I need not say more to recommend her to your compassion."

"You'll be kind to her, Wells," cried Miss Egremont, languidly; who had been flattered by Mr. Auber's reference to herself, and had, besides, played the amiable ever since her aunt's death. "I suppose," she continued, turning to her future husband, "she would not be suited to attend about my person."

"I fear not," he replied, smilingly, as he mentally contrasted the elaborate elegance of Miss Egremont's appearance, with the clumsy rusticity of the humble Margaret; "she would be any thing but an assistant to Miss Wilson," he resumed, glancing at the lady's own maid, who just then entered the room with a little French dog in her arms, the petted favourite of her young and silly mistress.

"My little Flo!" cried Sophia, as the animal evinced its delight on approaching her; "Do Secton look at the fond and faithful creature, how it loves me. I don't think it is quite well, Wilson, have you noticed it has no appetite? Give me one of those biscuits, my dear Captain—she is fond of them. Take my gloves, Wilson," as she drew them off, and prepared to break the biscuit into a saucer, into which she had already poured some cream.

"Permit me to prepare it, madam!" said the maid.

"No, no," cried her lady; "Flo will like it best from the hand of her fond mistress. Put her cushions this way; why she really will not touch it!" she exclaimed, with affected distress, as she endeavoured to persuade her favourite to take the food she had prepared for it. "Secton, what can be the matter with the dear little creature? Wells, do feel her little foot, is it not quite hot? Oh she is certainly ill, and I shall be quite wretched. Look at her, Captain, what do you think of her?—What has she had this morning, Wilson?"

While she thus kept a crowd vaporing about her, who in their hearts despised, though paying her the most servile devotion, her disgusted lover left the room. The refined and superior Adela obtruded an image on

his fancy, that he vainly tried to shut out. Not such he thought the manner in which she would have listened to the story of poor Margaret; not such the object that would have withdrawn her attention from it. How sweet with such a being to search the homes of sorrow and distress; to raise the drooping head of suffering and despondence; to soothe the couch of sickness and of pain; to rescue the oppressed, and recompense the good. He pictured to himself the mild beauty of her face, while breathing prayer or pity for the wretched; the eloquence of her large and tearful eyes; the gracefulness of her bending form; the fine moulding of her ministering hand; and continuing the sketch his fancy drew too well, and loved too much, he imaged her return from offices of charity, with the balm of conscious goodness at her heart, and the bliss of many blessings on her head: at first her air serious, not sad; her spirit calm, not cold; till gradually as other objects circled round her, and called on her attention, she grew into gaiety, and kindled the charms of her sparkling intellect and glowing nature; while her celestial countenance by turns exhibited

"The tear that enjoyment can gild with a smile,
And the smile that compassion can turn to a tear."

"That prized and precious assemblage of all that is valuable and sweet in woman, never must be mine," he cried; "in its place comes to my arms a cold insipid child of fashion, who wears her feelings like her baubles—for display; who moves like a puppet on the springs of etiquette; who can neither meet the elevation of my mind, nor the warmth of my heart. I am

rightly punished for entering so lightly into an engagement so solemn. What would be the consequence of breaking it? Sophia loves me, not as I might have been loved—but as deeply as her nature would permit—heartless to all, she has never been insensible to me. That thought alone forbids an act alien alike to gratitude and honour. She has lost too a considerable fortune, that golden lure that won my father to use his fatal agency. Would not she—would not the world believe, that this had some influence on my falling away from the troth I had plighted her. It must never be; Sophia must be my wife—and that too shortly. And she, whom would that I had never seen, or seen much sooner, must bless a happier, and I hope, a better man than I am. Clarence," he continued, as he paced too and fro in his room, "I will use myself to that name; chase from my heart the cold unchristian feeling that hitherto has made me shun him, stretch forth to him the hand of fellowship and friendship, and teach my heart to hold him as a brother. Adela shall smile, though not on me; and the knowledge of her happiness and prosperity, shall gild my life with a reflected joy, a moonlight lustre."

This was his mood of mind when Lord Egremont's return brought the news of the approaching visit of Lord and Lady Milsom, Caroline, Adela, and Lord Elmer, with the probable addition of the Earl and Clarence.

"Pray how fares my Lord Elmer's suit?" asked the Captain, as the gentlemen sat over their wine, after Miss Egremont withdrew.

"In truth, to judge by his looks, but sadly," replied

his lordship: "but perhaps he will exemplify the old adage, 'slow but sure.' To turn from him to one of another mettle, what think you of Oscar's fortune?"

"What, Mr. Finley?" said the Captain, "I have not heard a word of him, save that he is rapidly and most miraculously recovering his health!"

"I hope," cried Seeton, smiling, "he is not playing *Pate in peril* again."

"No faith; he's playing pate in a coronet, and he's gone over to St. Patrick's land, to try how it fits. His brother has taken a flying leap after the old peer his father, leaving no issue, and our nimble friend has nothing to do but to vault into the vacant place. By the by, what would you say Captain, if he took your daughter up behind him now, as he did on an expedition somewhat more perilous, and less profitable lately."

"Why provided it had a happier issue, I should rejoice in such an event;" cried Captain Auber, brightening at the very thought.

"Well, I think if she is wise, she will be as willing now as she was then, and Lady Rutledge will be a good name to be presented by?"

"When is his lordship's return from Ireland expected?" asked the Captain eagerly.

"Very shortly, I understand; and I'll bet five hundred to one, that he comes to Woburn on the wings of love, and scales the heights of matrimony with the same daring he did those of Dove Dale. By Jove, they had a pretty cooing business of it there. Love took him up, and death stood at the bottom, to catch

him when he tumbled down, but he cheated the gristly monster most miraculously."

"I rejoice to see your lordship in such improved spirits; I think you are as merry a chronicler, as ever bore record of mortality," observed Seeton.

"Why what's the good of lamenting the dead, when they have left you room to rejoice for the living? Now Mrs. Saugrober's has been a *melancholy* loss—the goose is gone and no golden eggs—but a truce to reflections that sadden me. Here's to the health of Lady Rutledge that is to be, in wine," cried he, holding his glass up to the light, "bright as her ruby lips, though not perhaps as sweet."

Her father and brother joined in the pledge, and Lord Egremont resumed—

"Come, if it should be as I suspect, what say you to a double wedding, and let us set the brother and sister afloat on the ocean of wedlock the same day."

"On earth nothing could make me happier," answered the Captain, "and I return the compliment your lordship has just paid me, by drinking the future Mrs. Auber."

The future bridegroom called upon all his recently cogitated philosophy to do honour to the toast. But there is a sparkling about true hilarity and real glee, that is beyond the powers of imitation; and Seeton's tame counterfeit did not escape Lord Egremont, who burst into a loud laugh, exclaiming—

"D—n it Auber, you look as if you were drinking sour wine, and trying to fancy it sweet. Never fear, you'll find a way out of the rocks and shoals of this

same ocean that we are about launching you upon. I'm sorry for the loss of part of the cargo, but it may cast up yet, and if it don't, you'll have enough to carry you through wind and tide."

"I hope, my lord, you do not imagine the circumstance of Miss Egremont's diminution of fortune, has made any difference to me?"

"I should not have blamed you if it had. But who have we here?" he cried, turning his head as the door opened. The servant announced Mr. Bolton and his son; and immediately after, the beautiful boy, with the papa that was his prototype, severally made their bows.

"Mr. Bolton," cried his lordship rising, and speaking with great emphasis, "welcome to Woburn; and you, the worthy son of a worthy father, I am heartily glad to see you both—more glasses Frank. What news from the stock exchange, and its cousin on the north of Cornhill?"

The elder Mr. Bolton was a man of few words; and very laconically replied, with a significant shake of the head—

"Little good."

"Indeed!" cried his lordship, "I should be sorry to hear you say so, only I believe that you do it mechanically. That has been your unvarying reply to that question for the last thirty years."

"Truer than ever:" rejoined the old man.

"I rejoice to see you looking so well, gentlemen;" cried Captain Auber, drinking to them, as some uneasy feelings came across him, on the score of sundry pounds that had long been owing to the father, and

sundry blows which had been so lately dealt to the son.

"Why Robert," cried Lord Egremont, as he filled the near glasses, and pushed the decanters, "you made rather a precipitate retreat from us last summer. Lord Elmer's was a complete 'crack-skull common,' I wonder we all got away alive."

"Ah!" said the younger Bolton, fetching a deep sigh at the memory of his mishaps, "I wonder *I* did. I've often talked of it since, believe me. 'God fits the back to the burthen,' or I should never have survived all I went through—such horrid frights! Any body else of the family here?" he added, lowering his voice as he addressed the question to his lordship, and nodding towards the captain, who was getting deep in conversation with the old merchant.

"No!" replied Lord Egremont.

"And pray," cried the ingenuous Robert, gaining courage from the assurance, "how is the poor young man Miss Caroline toppled down the rock?"

"Ready to climb another," rejoined his noble host; "and what is more, with the same partner."

"Well to be sure!" cried the young cit, raising his eyes with astonishment at such unheard-of temerity.

"Ah! I think he has had a lesson that should teach him to look before he leaps; but the general mode is to leap first and look after," said Lord Egremont.

"Vain retrospect!" exclaimed Seeton, who found himself pretty much in that case.

"So Mr. Frederic's superseded, I see," resumed young Bolton; "I'm glad of it."

"Sir Charles Linden and Mr. Frederic Auber," announced the servant, again throwing open the dining-room door.

Bolton turned pale, uttered a short ejaculation, and got round by his father. His emotion was however unmarked, from the general sensation the new arrival created.

Frederic sprang into the room with all his usual life, and brilliancy of appearance; embraced his father and brother after the fashion of a tragedy hero; but immediately after, pressed their hands with the warmth of sincere affection; and having greeted Lord Egremont, turned to the Boltons with an air which evinced an utter oblivion of all that had ever occurred in the way of injury or offence to the younger, whom he saluted by the title of little Mercury.

"So Oscar's Lord Rutledge!" he exclaimed, soon after he was seated; "why that fellow has had the devil's luck and his own; who that saw him capering from Renard's Hole a few months ago, would have have thought of his getting his fox's head under a coronet."

"Where did you hear of that?" inquired his brother.

"Where we are just come from—Richmond," he replied, "and where we have left the Marquis and Marchioness."

"And Adela!" rejoined Sir Charles, significantly.

"Aye indeed!" cried Lord Egremont, "she gave promise of being a beautiful girl when I saw her. Is it the case?"

"Nay, ask Frederic, my lord," cried the báronet, "he is best able to answer that question."

Frederic laughed and coloured.

"Hoh! Hoh!" quickly replied his lordship, "and he has struck to a foreign flag at last. By Jove, weddings will be as plenty as blackberries. Captain Auber, allow me to congratulate you on a daughter in perspective, whom I am certain will every way meet your wishes. Gentlemen, here's Mr. Frederic Auber's welcome home, and may he soon be a happy man."

Frederic rose, and bowed to the compliment, while his ingenuous countenance sparkled with delight. A spirit of hilarity animated the party, and under the cover of the general conversation, Captain Auber came round to his son, and asked him if there was any thing serious in the allusion Sir Charles Linden had made with regard to the marquis's daughter.

"Certainly, my dear sir;" he replied, in the same under tone in which his father had addressed him, "It waits but your sanction."

The delighted father pressed his hand in expressive silence, while Secton, who had noted what had past, envied the happy volatility of his brother's nature.

"And what, in the name of dulness, have you all been ábout, since I've been gone. You appear to me to have been dreaming your lives away," cried Frederic; "How is Miss Egremont?"

"Well, as a very great loss will let her be," replied her father, "her little aunt, and her large fortune; that's the rub, Mr. Boulton. But come, she must have expected us ere this, in the drawing room," and

his lordship rose; a movement which was immediately followed by all the gentlemen present.

Miss Egremont was seated in great state, attended by some of her satellites, who imitated her airs, and echoed her sentiments. Having no one near her to contest the supremacy she loved, looking very pretty, and very elegantly attired, she received the gentlemen in high spirits, and appeared to more than usual advantage.

"Upon my soul Sophia improves," whispered Frederic to his brother.

"I don't think you can say as much of me," was the reply.

"Why no; you might say as does Faulkland, 'Have I been the life and soul of company?' and I might answer as did Absolute."

"And with more absolute truth," cried Seeton; "but you appear to have imported a fresh stock of gaiety, of the true Gallic order?"

"What do you say to following my prescription? I've some notion you've a touch of the same malady."

"The same medicine acts not the same on all constitutions."

"Try it, try it," said his brother; "there is a magic in the air of France. Love is an epidemic, and the best plan is to leave the place where it rages."

"And what is marriage?" cried Seeton, in a tone of more melancholy than he was aware.

"Why sometimes a chronic distemper. You seem to me something like the parson's horse, to have no inclination to carry double. But come, you were

born to adorn the world, and to be happy; you are infinitely more deserving of being so than I am, and shall be so. The flowers are now springing that will strew your future path."

Secton replied in the following lines—

"Nay tell me not a beam will break
 Above my path, and gild my way:
That where I tread the flowers will wake
 And woo the sunny beam to stay.

No, there's a cold and hovering cloud
 Approaching, o'er my fate to cast
A sombre gloom, a deathly shroud,
 And mar each beam of brightness past."

"I shall scold you, Secton, for thus engrossing your brother," cried Miss Egremont, advancing to join them; "remember he has been as long lost to me as to you. Dear Frederic," she added playfully, "What have you brought me from France?"

"Myself!" cried he; could I bring you any thing better?"

"Nay, but I am sure you have not forgotten me, Frederic; and you will let me see your taste, in culling from a land of tasteful trifles. What would *you* have brought me, Secton, had you gone, instead of your brother?"

"A broken heart!" he answered, with a sigh.

"Oh! that would have been better as a parting gift, than as one on your return, Secton. Papa, what would you have brought me from France?" And thus she went with the same silly question to every one in the room, canvassing for compliments. She was very generally gratified, for the gentlemen were in high spirits, and had not spared the bottle. She

was besides the daughter of their host, the prettiest woman in the room, and an heiress. She drank of the intoxicating draughts of flattery with an unsatiated thirst; and in proportion as her vanity became inflated, did she become more ridiculously weak; till at last she had the folly to mention some lines which had been written in her praise, and was on the point of favouring the company with them, when her father interrupted her, remarking that he had committed a theft, and stolen some leaves from Lady Milsom's album, but that he had acknowledged his crime before he went, and obtained pardon; and in reward of his honest confession, had been permitted to retain what he had so feloniously taken.

"Mr. Auber," he continued, "you are a fine reader, oblige me by reading these pages to the company."

Seeton took the leaves, with a slight inclination of the head, that at once acknowledged the compliment, yet modestly disavowed the superiority the preference implied; but he had so sooner cast his eyes on them, than he perceived the writing was Adela Belmont's, and the palpitation of his heart precluded the possibility of reading them without betraying his emotion.

"I am unequal to the task of doing this justice, my lord. I was not aware it was poetry, when I—"

"Your lordship should have selected me," interrupted Frederic, snatching the leaves from his brother, whom he with pain beheld so much affected; "make me a *rostrum*. I like to do every thing in form. But no; I am not in a mood, neither; allow me to propose

Sir Charles Linden, even Harry Hotspur had heard poetry from his mouth with pleasure."

"I undertake the office out of mere shame, that a lady's production should thus go begging for a reader, and the company be in the mean time kept, like thirsty travellers, in view of a fountain, whose waters are denied them:" and bowing to his auditors, he read the following poem with taste and feeling.

## LAKE LEMAN,

### A TALE.

Descending day had ceased to throw
O'er Leman's lake its lucent glow,
Though still its burnished waters lay
All glowing from the noontide ray.
The Alpine mountains' towering height
Scarce tinged with day's retiring light,
In sullen grandeur widely threw
Around their base a deeper hue.
The lofty pines and herbage gave
Their image to the glassy wave,
And broke with shadowy grace the light
That else were too intensely bright.
No sighing winds in murmurs rose,
To break sooth'd nature's calm repose;
But all was silent as the ray
That flitted to the west away.

Ah! such the hour so sweet, so calm,
When love renews each vanish'd charm,
When musing fancy loves to trace
And image some remembered grace;
Some parting look, that left its light
Where absence shed a deeper night.

Thus Eva stray'd to shed the tear,
And breathe the sorrows none might hear;

The secret woe, too deep, too much.
For friend to soothe, or time to touch.

Yet oft the beams of transient mirth
  Would kindle in her soft blue eye,
But like the light that gilds the earth,
  When parting summer quits the sky;
It spoke of pleasures dear, but past,
And sparkled but to be o'ercast;
And those who heard her laugh, would say,
'Twas sunshine in a wintry day.

"Oh! Edmund I must cease to breathe
  To even breathe thy name of love;
And I must tear each rosy wreath
  That ever for thy brows I wove.
The flowers you kiss'd and gave to me,
  This fond, this foolish heart has cherish'd—
Oh! still their sweetness breathes of thee,
  Though every brighter charm has perished!
I must not dare to love thee now,
I must forget each plighted vow;
From thy remembrance learn to part,
And tear thy image from my heart."

Her white arms folded o'er the breast,
Whose pulses knew no pause of rest;
Her upraised eyes, her mournful air
Spoke all the calmness of despair:
But kindling to a deeper glow,
She woke to wild and frenzy'd woe.

"Edmund!" she shrieked, "this placid lake
Eva her last cold bed will make;
Here shall her martyr'd heart repose,
And find a refuge from her woes;
'Twas here you first to passion woke it,
And *here* Oh! Edmund! here you broke it!

Who clasped her form with that wild air
That mingled madness, love, despair?
Whose throbbing breast received her head,
That droop'd as if life's light had fled?

"Wake Eva, wake! look up and bless
  This blasted, withered heart once more;
One smile to soothe death's bitterness,
  One parting kiss, and all is o'er.
Turn not away, but hear me love
By every beam that burns above—
This heart is thine, (though wreck'd and curst,)
Unchanged to thee, as when it first
Caught from thine eyes the soul-felt flame
That now it trembles but to name.
I pledged the perjured vow 'tis true
That severed me from love and you,
To save a father—but 'tis o'er,
And fortune cannot rack me more.
Yet, Eva, when thy worshipper
For ever lost his guiding star,
*Then* most he loved its light, and felt
That suns might fade, and rocks might melt,
But Eva would remain to him,
When every other sun was dim;
A beam of brightness o'er his fate,
To make it look more desolate
Oh! what were worlds of wealth to me!
Had life a charm when lost to thee?
One smile from those dear lips of thine
Were worth it, were the world of mine.

"I fled the scene where horror shed
Her direst evils o'er my head;
To seek again the hallow'd shade
Where blessed with Eva once I stray'd—
To view each sacred spot again,
Ah! worshipped, loved, and view'd in vain
To bless her name, and then to make
My silent grave in Leman's lake!"

"Edmund!" the maddened Eva cried,
"In death I then may be thy bride;
Without a crime partake thy grave—
Together let us seek the wave.
The happiest life has not the charms
Of death in Edmund's faithful arms!

Come, come my love, the sky grows dim,
Hark! angels breathe our funeral hymn.
Mine, mine again! mine, mine at last,
This moment overpays the past."

Her wild ecstatic laugh confessed,
The tumult of her frenzy'd breast;
And yet in joy's ecstatic minute,
Her eye ne'er had such magic in it;
Her smile, her form, ne'er beam'd more bright
Than on that wild and fatal night
And Edmund felt its potent spell
Through all the pulses of his frame,
Felt his wild heart to bursting swell,
As kneeling he invoked her name

"Oh! Eva, Eva, wert thou born to be
The victim of a tyrant sire's decree?
Could the same sun that beamed when thou wert born,
Light this cold earth upon that fatal morn
That saw me yield, oh! coward, madman fool!
My better reason to another's rule!
Why did not death and darkness only reign,
And demons rise to desolate the plain,
Earth from its centre raze, and hurl it far,
Where every stream might burst, and atom jar!
But come thou fond one, dearer still in death,
Spend on my lip the sweetness of thy breath—
Fate, I defy thee now————"
They plung'd below,
The waters parted to the desperate blow,
Clasp'd in each other's arms, they sought the wave—
A hurry'd prayer for pardon Edmund gave;
But she was all too wild, to feel or fear,
Aught but the dread of losing one too dear.
Again to lose him, and yet breathe, and live,
Was the worst agony that fate could give;
But death in fond devotion on his breast,
Came like the promise of eternal rest.
Gazing upon him as her only care,
The severed wave received the fated pair;
The slumbering echoes murmured back the knell,
That woke upon the waters where they fell.

Sir Charles Linden concluded with a pathos that hushed awhile the murmur of applause which his graceful and effective elocution won for this effort of Adela's muse. By turns his fine voice had sunk in low murmurs—thrilled in the soft accents of the love-lorn Eva, or kindled into frenzy; still more powerfully and vividly did he portray the passionate and unfortunate lover, till towards the close he sunk into a deep tone of melancholy feeling, that touched every heart with sympathy.

Every one spoke of the poem according to the temper and disposition of their minds.

"Beautiful!" exclaimed Miss Egremont, under the impression that it was the production of Lady Milsom.

"Beautiful!" echoed her attendant nymphs, with parasitical mimickry; and when undeceived as to the author, were under the mortifying necessity of remaining silent, ashamed to retract an eulogium they had so emphatically pronounced.

Captain Auber praised the poem, but condemned the subject and the sentiment.

"It is to such productions, that we may trace," he exclaimed, "all the mischief of disobedient children, and unequal matches. Love is held up as an invincible passion, which, if unfortunate, must terminate in death or madness. Nonsense! there is no such thing in the world as the love poets describe; and if there is, I think the world would be best without it. I have seen many marriages in my life, and I never knew one founded on romantic love, happy."

"I dare say," cried Frederic, laughing, "you are

quite of Mrs. Malaprop's opinion, and you think it best to begin with a little aversion."

The current of argument ran strong against the captain, who however very valiantly maintained his ground, against much lively wit, and some warm feelings, though he who could have best spoken on the subject, remained silent.

Seeton had neither praised nor criticised the poem, but he had not lost a line of it. It was founded on an incident that he had himself related to Adela, as they were one day conversing together at Matlock; and the fate of the young lovers who had perished together in the Lake of Geneva, then called a tear to her eye, that had impressed the narrator, as much as the narrative had done her. That her time, while at Richmond, had been employed on a subject so connected with the recollection of himself, flushed Seeton's cheek with pleasure; she had given a tone also to the tale, that touched their relative situations, and the old and half-formed fancies of the place he held in Adela's heart, again fluttered about his own. To write as she did, discovered an acquaintance with the passion; he thought with Burns, that nothing was more vapid and ineffective than love verses, by those untouched by what they sought to paint. By the quick deduction of natural logic, he had arrived at the certainty that Adela loved. Who? was a question he feared alike to ask or to answer.

## CHAPTER XXVII.

"Come hither Hubert. O my gentle Hubert
We owe thee much; within this wall of flesh
There is a soul counts thee her creditor,
And with advantage means to pay thy love
And my good friend, thy voluntary oath,
Lives in this bosom dearly cherished
Give me thy hand, I have a thing to say,—
* * * * * * * *
By heaven, Hubert, I'm almost ashamed
To say what good respect I have of thee."

SHAKESPEARE.

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LORD Egremont's departure from Richmond was almost instantly followed by the arrival of the Marquis de Pomenas, his lady, and his daughter, accompanied by Frederic and Sir Charles Linden. Few things could equal Lady Milsom's joy on the occasion. To meet an only sister, after a long separation, is one of those events in which the purest and best emotions of the heart are called forth. The quick eye of affection glances over the form, to mark what changes (if any) the period of absence has produced, while every look recals some memory of time past, that is sweet and interesting.

The marchioness had adopted the French style so much in dress and manner, that the purity of her English could alone destroy the illusion that she was



*The Marchioness de Pomenars meeting Lady Milner*

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not a Parisian. She bore a great resemblance to Lady Milsom, but a still greater one to Caroline, though taller and more striking than either. While the sisters were embracing each other, and Emelia was presenting her lord, Frederic had flown to meet Caroline with eager joy. From her he turned to Miss Belmont, and then held out his hand to Lord Elmer.

When her first emotion of delight subsided, Lady Milsom presented Adela to her sister, the marquis, and to her young and beautiful namesake, who was a brilliant brunette, with hair jetty as the raven's wing, sloe-black eyes, lips of the brightest vermillion, and a form such as spirits might assume; so lightly, so delicately proportioned.

Adela spoke little English: "Oh!" she exclaimed with quickness, "so difficult *pour une Françoise*;" but drawing Miss Belmont aside, she soon found (to strengthen the prepossession she had immediately conceived in her favour) that she was as far as the language went, a perfect Frenchwoman.

Frederic's impatience to see his father and brother, would not permit him to stay more than a few hours at the earl's; but these few hours he employed in rendering himself agreeable, and facilitating the mutual acquaintance of all parties with each other.

His friend Oscar was among the first for whom he inquired; and being satisfied respecting him, he next asked for Clarence. He was absent in attendance on Lord Errol at the house of a neighbouring gentleman. The time passed, and neither his lordship nor his secretary appeared. Frederic's patience became exhausted, and he rose to depart, delegating the task

to his sister of making his compliments to the Earl of Errol, and presenting his friendly regards to her deliverer. Caroline coloured from a two-fold cause, first from the consciousness of the deep, deep interest Clarence had in her heart; and secondly from the tone in which her brother spoke. It is true there was gratitude in Frederic's remembrance of Clarence, but it was of that condescending kind which a superior pays to an inferior; a kind of conscious sense of the distance that existed between them, and that benefits were almost paid by such thanks.

Caroline had her full share of family pride and all the stiff-necked dignity of rank, but its present exhibition wounded her to the soul. It gave her an idea of the light in which her lover was, and would be held by her family, however great might be the courtesy his preservation of her life, and his personal merit procured him.

The moment Frederic and his friend were gone, Caroline withdrew to her own room, under pretence of having something of importance to arrange before she dressed for dinner. Shutting herself up, she yielded to the train of reflections which a circumstance so trifling as her brother's manner had awakened. What is Clarence, she thought, in their eyes, in the eyes of the world? The dependant of the earl. If they inquire further, to whom can he trace his being? alas! he knows not. Parentless, friendless, with no inheritance, save his talents and his virtues, how will the proud Aubers spurn him should he seek to blend his unknown name with theirs. Duty and love in my case are incompatible:

I must renounce the one or the other. At that moment the sound of our heroine's voice as she passed the door, struck her ear. She opened it and beheld her with the gay young Parisian leaning on her arm.

"Come to me Aaela," she cried, "as soon as you are disengaged, I wish to speak to you." Then addressing a few words in French to her companion, she returned into her room.

The affectionate Adela was not slow in obeying the summons of her friend.

"Dear Caroline," she cried as she glided quickly into the room," has any thing occurred to distress you? You look disturbed and uneasy!"

"Nothing more than has existed ever since you knew me, only circumstances have just now pressed it painfully on my consideration, and my heart would relieve itself by taking counsel with you, dear Adela."

Our heroine took her hand, and pressed it affectionately, as she said—

"Alas! if you, blessed with beauty, rank, and fortune, are not happy, who can hope to be so. Those enviable distinctions ——."

"Are my bane" interrupted she. "Was I an humble, unconnected girl, I should not now live in a continual dissimulation of my feelings, and my sentiments. I should not be in the daily practice of wounding the heart, I'd pierce my own to heal."

"Wounding his heart?" repeated her friend, "are you not, have you not ever been the bliss of his existence, the solace of his fate?"

"No! it were better he had never known me—it were better he had perished in the woods of Nice. What will be the consequence of a passion that is hourly gaining strength? It will lay him open to the scorn of shallow pride, and she who would raise him (were it in her power) to a throne, will be the instrument of his humiliation."

Adela replied, but with a sigh, perhaps more in sympathy with Clarence, than with Caroline.

"Tell me, Adela," she passionately exclaimed, "tell me the path I ought to take in the crisis that I feel approaching. Before me sits my father frowning in all the dignity of parental authority, around him are relatives proud as himself, but richer and more elevated; in the vista I behold the long train of connections to whom I more or less belong, these call on me to preserve my station in society, or pass to a higher one. Beside me stands my lone and friendless Clarence, without home, country, or kindred: in payment of the assistance I would have given any of my kind, he gave me the best affections of a noble heart. In the hour of danger, without a moment's selfish hesitation he periled his dear life for mine. In your hands, Adela, I place the balance. Hold it steadily, and tell me on which side does the scale preponderate. Shall I pursue the path of duty, and thus secure my interests; or that of love, and hazard the ills of life? Shall I administer to my father's pride, and leave Clarence to despair; or, sharing Clarence's fate, renounce all the alliances of my youth?"

"How painful is the task that you assign me. Oh,

Caroline, how to counsel you I know not, but how to pity you I do."

"Ask your own heart," resumed Caroline, "I appeal to that; could you in my place abandon Clarence?"

"Impossible!" fervently replied Adela, "but—"

"But what?" impatiently repeated her friend.

"I would chose a middle path. Disobedience to a parent is a dreadful thing; it would poison the fountain of your happiness, and dash with bitterness the cup of pleasure. Who can tell what may be lying in embryo. Time may—"

"Yes," again interrupted Caroline; "I will tell you what time will do. It will add the force of habit to the strength of passion, and make the daily intercourse we now enjoy, as necessary to our existence as the air we breathe. Time will cement the union of our hearts, till the wrench that is to sever them must destroy, before it can divide. Time will bring my father, with his stern command, and his proud ambition, rendered more severe by former disappointments, and I must brave reproaches and persuasion on the one side, and all the agony of silent suffering and unuttered sorrow on the other."

"Have patience, dearest Caroline, I know 'tis bitter, but its fruit is sweet. Do not anticipate sorrow ere it comes. Some refuge may yet—"

"Yes, it is easy to talk thus calmly with a heart at rest," petulantly exclaimed Caroline; "to preach to me of patience, is like lulling to repose the victim at the stake. Adela, if I am driven to extremity, will you stand my friend?"

"Why should you doubt it?"

"Will you become the companion of my flight, if a step so desperate is necessary, and generously make an interest for me with your mother, that we may find a sanctuary in her home, till we can determine on some plan for the future?"

Adela paused, at once astonished at the rapidity and determination with which Caroline appeared to form her plans: and alarmed at the idea of being implicated in an action that appeared to her so fearful: feeling too, as she did, how much she had already suffered from acting as Caroline's confidant.

"You hesitate:" cried the ardent and impetuous Miss Auber. "You would desert me at a moment I most need the countenance and support of a female friend! I thought I had in Adela a sister, and how often have I heard you say, you held Clarence as a brother. But you are right—desert us; prudence will applaud the deed. By all but one forsaken, and forgotten; he who has known so well the bitterness of destitution, shall teach me to bear the only one that wounds me—the desertion of Adela Belmont!"

With all the powerful aids of a fine voice, of speaking attitude, an expressive countenance, and a graceful form, Caroline did not need the auxiliary that arose to her assistance; it was a look that spoke she was the sister of Seeton Auber. Never had she looked so like him. There was a softening in her eye, an expression about her mouth, a melancholy in her tones, that would have struck any one, however superficially acquainted with him; how much more that one who

had studied him till she had every look and tone of his by heart.

Throwing herself into Caroline's arms, with an ardour which her friend gratefully placed to the account of friendship, she gave her the most unlimited assurances of assistance and support.

When they descended together to the saloon, Adela thought of the days when Caroline had first made her the confidant of the secret of her heart, and she felt as if they were coming over again. They found the room full of company; Adela, and her beautiful step mother the marchioness, were the universal points of attraction, as much from their novelty as their beauty. So dear is novelty to those to whom habits of luxury and indulgence have long left nothing new to look upon; whose exhausted minds sigh for enjoyment in the midst of satiety.

The friends glanced round the company for the object of their late conversation, but Clarence was not there, and Caroline began to feel uneasy at his lengthened absence. She was almost tempted to make some inquiry of the earl, but she feared the circumstance might excite railery or remark, and his lordship was besides engaged in earnest conversation with the marquis. She had hitherto preserved a most guarded line of conduct, though the natural gaiety of her manner laid her less open to remark, than one who was more habitually reserved; if she betrayed herself, it was in the loss of her spirits, not their exuberance. This was her case at the present moment, her mind being too much abstracted to attend to many who successively addressed her. At length Clarence appeared, and

fixed her attention. She marked his air, which blended deference to the rank around him, with so much of the self-possession of conscious merit, that it was difficult to say which swayed his manner most. She marked the graceful urbanity, which gilding the surface of a melancholy fortune, always retained a trace of that which it covered, and rarely mantled with gaiety. A light flashed into his eyes as he met hers, and he was approaching the place where she was seated, when the voice of the Marquis de Pomenars, elevated in giving a description of a battle, induced him to turn. Caroline glanced from him to the object that had attracted his attention, and beheld the marquis, who was in uniform, with his tall figure drawn to its utmost height, and his right arm extended, as if charging at the head of his troops. She could not but admire him, but he did not long withdraw her eyes from Clarence, to whom turning them again, she perceived the colour had forsaken his cheek, while a singular expression was seated in his pallid face; again she looked to the marquis, who at that moment fixed his eyes on Clarence, with a look of quick and yet doubtful recognition, and instantly addressed the earl as if making inquiries respecting him.

An apprehension she could not define, thrilled her frame with an icy coldness, and kept her the immoveable spectatress of a scene, which whispered terror to her soul without the agency of language. Twice was the offer of Lord Elmer's arm made, as the company began to move to dinner, before she was made sensible of the necessity of rising; when she did, she walked on mechanically, and took her seat at the table, in the

same manner. Beside her sat the marquis, and when he first spoke she started as at the bursting of a cannon; the next moment she looked around for Clarence, but he was not present. With an effort of memory almost as wonderful as Hannibal's, who could name every soldier in his army, she in her mind called over the company to ascertain if any one else was absent, with whom he might yet appear. All were assembled save only him. She called for a glass of water, to keep herself from fainting. The marquis again spoke, but his voice sounded as if muffled, and at a distance, and she vainly tried to catch the sense of what he said. She endeavoured to eat, but she could not swallow a morsel. With the utmost effort she kept her place till dinner ended, and anxiously watched the signal for withdrawing, which as the conversation was general and agreeable, was uncommonly protracted. She had been seated at dinner by persons comparatively strangers to her, so that her emotion which would have attracted the attention of Adela, Lady Milsom, or any who knew her intimately, excited but little notice. The number of the party also precluded her approaching them, as they kept the dining-room attended by many of the gentlemen, so that Caroline made her escape almost wholly unobserved.

She crossed the hall, and was flying up stairs, when her course was arrested by Mr. Chudleigh, who would have led her to the drawing room; but she broke from him, and was hastening to the seclusion of her own apartment, just as Clarence approached her.

"Indulge me with a moment's conversation," said

he in a low voice. She gave him her hand in silence, and suffered herself to be conducted to the library. He placed her in a seat, and pressed her hand to his lips as he did so, then turned to the table at which he had been writing letters, and placed and replaced some of the papers. The composure he had struggled to attain, had evidently forsaken him. Caroline rose from the chair in which he had placed her, and approached him.

"Clarence, what is the meaning of these dreadful fears that chill my heart; this agitation, this emotion, against which you vainly combat? Tell me for heaven's sake!"

He pressed his ourning forehead with his hand, as he caught her's with the other.

"The dream is past!" he cried, "I thought my felicity was too great to last. Again I shall go forth a solitary wretch. Would that the suffering were all my own; but I shall plant a pang in this kind heart:" and as he spoke, he drew her towards him, and pressed her to his bosom.

"To what does all this lead?" she cried, "Whence your emotion at meeting the marquis? Oh! Clarence tell me all!"

"I need but tell you one thing. I must fly, forget me; let me not make a wreck of this fair temple. For myself, it little matters where I am cast, or what wild wave may henceforth overwhelm me: but you, the loved of many, the delight of all, you should have shunned companionship with one, who gulfed in sorrow and calamity, draws all that loved him into common ruin. I have brought you hither Caroline, for

—a sad task, but 'tis a last one!" emotion choked his utterance, and she clung to him as she cried—

"Speak intelligibly, Clarence. Let me know the worst. I am no coward, do not fear to tell me, I shall bear it firmly."

"I am glad to hear you say so," he answered, with affected calmness; "Let me see no tear then to unman me, as thus I press you for the last, last time to this sad heart. Farewell my life, my Caroline, for ever."

"Clarence, would you drive me mad? What do you mean?"

"That I must fly this place immediately, and you for ever. I see the evil destiny that pursues, will never leave me. The marquis is my superior officer; he views me as I am—a deserter and a murderer, virtually if not actually. I know well the colours in which Le Gant has painted me."

"But the marquis is too noble," exclaimed Caroline; "and are you not safe under the protection of the laws of another country?"

"The marquis has a duty to perform, and power to aid him in its execution; but were he even willing to wave that power and that duty, he is a public man, and I must not offend him with my presence, branded as I am. As little can I stay to meet degradation, where hitherto I have only met distinction. We have indulged too long in visions that never may be realized. You are destined to adorn an elevated sphere; I to range through life an alien and an outcast. You will think of me sometimes, Caroline, in after life, with less pain I trust, but not with less pity, less esteem

than now. And I— but this is vain! 'tis draining the little courage I have left, and I shall want it all when we have parted. Oh! to have breathed so long beside thee; to have studied all thy charms and graces till my eyes grew familiar with their dazzling lustre; and then to rush into the cimmerian night of absence! eternal absence! like a second Adam banished from Paradise, with all a wild and unknown world before me."

"Fear it not, my Clarence, when thy Eve goes with thee. Nay, do not question or dispute my resolution. Be your fortune what it may, from this hour I share it. Trust me, I have no terrors for the future. Borne up by mutual love, we cannot fall; 'tis only separation makes us weak."

"Do I hear aright? pause awhile, my love; tempt me not thus, make me not the wretch to seize you at a fond unguarded moment, and drag you down a gulf you ne'er can rise from. Look, look around, see what you would leave—rank, fortune, pleasure, and distinction. What do you embrace? poverty, obscurity, nay dishonour."

"Not so; dishonour never yet was coupled with the name of Clarence, and were it so, branded by all the world, you're white to me. You make a false estimate of what I leave; without you all is barrenness; with you all is hope. In any other situation, there would be an indelicacy foreign to my nature, thus to press on you the assurance of my love: but I cannot let you fall from a sentiment of refinement that is only fitted for the place in which it sprung. The free and pure emotions of nature, spurn the fetters of etiquette and cus-

tom. It has ever been my feeling that, when once a woman has confessed her attachment, every concession, every exertion is as much due on her part as on his. It is only descending from the heroics by which we exalt ourselves into heroines, and acting on the principles of common sense and common feelings: on such I now act. Never will I forsake you, Clarence; I turn my back on scenes that are only bright when shared with you. I will call upon the talents I possess, the resources my education afford me, and unite myself to your toils as well as your fate."

"Oh! noblest as you are dearest of created beings," exclaimed the penetrated Clarence: "How ill do I deserve you, how much less, could I admit a sacrifice such as you offer me. The eyes of the world, the hopes of friends are on you; far different is the election they expect you to make. Now at the moment that I feel you twined with my heart strings, and that my love and life must cease together, honour and gratitude bid me step back, and chase the selfish wishes from my heart, that love has planted there. No, first and only idol of my soul, farewell. Like a bankrupt wretch, I give up the last and brightest gem my fortune boasted, rather than bury it with me in a dungeon."

"No, like an ingrate, you would cast it from you. Oh! Clarence, this is no hour to indulge the fond reproaches of suffering love. But you go not hence, or if you do, I go forth with you; and till you lay me in the last cold sleep, from which there is no waking, these eyes shall never cease to watch with thee, to

weep for thee. Never till that hour shalt thou be again a solitary, a homeless wanderer!"

"Merciful heaven!" ejaculated Clarence, as he raised his hands and eyes, and then caught Caroline to his breast; "Thou hast bestowed a treasure beyond the pride of empire, or the wealth of worlds, and I will wear her in my heart of hearts the proudest and the happiest of men!"

For a moment they indulged the transport of devoted love, as Clarence reiterated, "My wife! my Caroline!" and she, "My preserver! my husband!" Then, checking the violence of their feelings, they entered on the consideration necessary to the arrangement for their flight.

Caroline was one of those women who in humble life would have made what is termed a good manager, a science which, though it brings its possessor none of that hollow praise which is attached to more brilliant and less useful qualifications, is nevertheless the science of happiness. She saw immediately the best and readiest plans to adopt on every occasion, and was as prompt to execute, as she was quick in the conception. Clarence listened to her at once with delight and admiration, as she sketched the whole arrangement of their departure and progress. Informing him with precision his best plan for procuring horses, &c. and the geography of the road they were to travel.

"My sweet Caroline! dear arbitress of my future destiny, will you pardon my opposing one point of your arrangement? It is that which makes Miss Belmont a partner in our flight; it cannot aid, and might

impede our course, while it will throw a censure upon her she might as well avoid. Do not even apprize her of your intention, do not even bid her farewell."

"I believe you are right, my dear Clarence. I only thought of myself when I proposed her joining us. My heart is saddened as I think of leaving her, for many a petulant and wayward humour has she borne from me. How could I inflict them upon one so gentle? Clarence, I have many faults; but my love shall cure or conquer them. There is not one but I will tear away, though it had been cherished at my heart from childhood, if I but see it render me less dear to you. But we are wasting precious moments; go, and, as Belvidera says, '*Remember twelve.*'"

She had scarcely reached her own room, ere Adela entered, declaring she had only just been able to break away, and solicitously inquiring the cause of her absence. Caroline pleaded indisposition, and expressed a fear that she had a tendency to fever; but attributing the whole to the effect of a cold, and of anxiety of mind.

"I shall retire to bed immediately, and lie late in the morning; in fact, nurse myself the whole of the day, sovereign remedies with me. Make my apologies in the drawing-room, and particularly whisper my excuses to the new comers, I mean the ladies; so now dear Adela good night." She kissed our heroine with unusual tenderness, who returned her embrace with equal affection, and returned to the drawing-room perfectly unsuspicious of her friend's resolves.

As soon as Adela was gone, Caroline rung for her

own maid; and during the interval of solitude, her thoughts were busied in seeking excuses for the step she meditated. Among the most prominent of which was the certainty of Lord Rutledge declaring himself her lover, and the support he would meet on all sides, being a still greater favourite with her family than Mr. Chudleigh, especially with her brothers; and now that he was the possessor of a title and a fortune, she knew he would supersede every less opulent and distinguished suitor with her father.

The moment Ann appeared, her mistress pointed to some things which in the midst of her meditations she had been selecting from her drawers, and desired her to pack them. The woman stared, not being aware that her lady intended making any visit; and observing the things chosen out were the last with which she generally troubled herself; commonly merely looking to a particular head-dress, and naming some other article of light and ornamental decoration. But on the present occasion, a few necessaries only were thrown together. Caroline could not suppress a smile at the silent astonishment with which Ann went mechanically through the task of packing the little trunk; and which increased when she saw her lady take her jewel casket, and a sum of money, and place it also within the mysterious box, which unlike Pandora's, had the best thing at the top instead of the bottom.

"Ann, you are surprised at all this; and so convinced am I of your affection for me, that I will trust you—nay, I shall need your assistance. You are my foster-sister, the same milk has nourished us both. Let that circumstance have its full weight."

"Dear madam, I hope I have always showed my love and duty too well for you to doubt it at this time of day; and I hope you believe there is nothing I would not do either to please or serve you."

"Then you can do both, Ann, and by a very simple line of conduct. A little before twelve, attend me with that box to the garden gate, the gate that leads into the lane. There I shall bid you farewell. Return to the house, and sleep in my room, and refuse admittance to every one to-morrow, under the plea of my indisposition and disinclination to see any one; thus I shall at least gain a day and night before any pursuit can be commenced, for I imagine the day after to-morrow my absence must become known."

"Good gracious madam, what do you say? is it possible you are going to make a *developement!* Oh, madam, your papa, the captain, will kill me when he comes to know that I have been a *complice*. Oh! indeed ma'am, let me persuade you to think—"

"I *have* thought, Ann, and determined; I hope you do not expect that any thing *you* can urge can divert me from my purpose. Manage this little commission skilfully, keep my flight unknown as long as you can, and trust me I shall recompense you for this, as well as other services, amply."

"Oh! my dear madam, I hope you do not think of parting with me; and if I cannot accompany, that you will permit me to join you afterwards, and very soon."

Another woman would have sighed, as the recollection came across her, that henceforth she must forego the luxury and pageantry of style and fortune. Not so

Caroline. She did not suffer her spirit one moment to unbend, or indulge in the weakness of vain lamentation. Clarence and the sufferings he had braved were at once her object and example; and her voice lost not one tone of cheerfulness as she replied—

"No, Ann; I shall probably not require your services, as I shall— but no matter; it shall be my care that you are provided for. I did not bring you from your grandmother's cottage in Devonshire, to throw you on the chances of the world. But I will write to you on the subject; now I have no time, get my riding habit, hat, and veil."

Caroline saw the tears in Ann's eyes, and was touched by the silent and unobtrusive affection of the poor girl, who was a very distinct character from that of the professed waiting-woman.

"Not that hat, Ann," cried her mistress; "my black one and my black veil, I must not be conspicuous. This dark habit is the very thing. Come, come Ann, wipe away those tears, surely this is a sad way of wishing me joy."

"But indeed I do, madam," said Ann, now sobbing audibly; "But oh! this is'nt the wedding I expected yours to be. I always reckoned on the dozens and dozens of white satin bows I should have to make; and the ringing of the bells, and the joy and the glee of every body. Lady Emilia's was a very pretty wedding, but I always thought yours would be much prettier, because you are so much livelier than your cousin; and all at last to end in your stealing away at night, and instead of laughing and rejoicing, there's to be nothing but crying and scolding."

Never did Lydia Languish sigh more over the frustration of her elopement, than this worthy Abigail over the progress of Caroline's; but it did not damp the spirits of her mistress, whose greatest pain arose from suspense, and watching for the expected hour; that hour in which she was to overstep the limits of filial duty, and feminine decorum. The merits of her lover, and the motives of her conduct, however, in some measure sanctified her crime; but of these Ann could not judge, her lady not having made her acquainted with the partner of her flight; and as to the motives, poor Ann was incapable of estimating them. With a sad and unwilling step therefore, she descended the back stairs, followed by her mistress. The moment was one of breathless anxiety; they were without a light, save that which flashed in sparks of agitation from their eyes. The company were all assembled in the supper-room, and the servants consequently fully engaged; yet still they trembled from the apprehension of being met. Perhaps it was under the influence of fright, but ere they had descended many stairs, Ann pitched down the remainder of the flight, with the box she carried, and came with no gentle bounce against a door at the bottom.

Caroline stood still, struck with panic at an event so unfortunate, and at a noise which, to her apprehensive ears, sounded nothing short of thunder; but recovering herself immediately, she ran down, and in a whispering voice asked Ann, who had not uttered a sound, if she was hurt. Great was Caroline's relief to hear her reply in the negative. As there were still more stairs to descend, Caroline, forgetting all the helplessness

that generally distinguishes women of her rank, wished to take charge of the box. But this was a proposal more shocking to the faithful Ann, than the fright of the fall, or the terror of the elopement; and Caroline, finding that her servant's notions of etiquette would lead her to forget the necessity of silence and caution, yielded up the point. Again they were proceeding, when the door against which Ann had fallen, was suddenly opened, and an old domestic, whom the noise had reached, appeared. Caroline hastily stepped back, to avoid the light of the candle he held in his hand, while Ann with an admirable presence of mind blew it out.

"So Miss Ann these are your tricks," exclaimed he, surlily; "It's a pity your lady does'nt know some of your goings-on. If the truth was known, you've been rompsing with that idle fellow James, and he's now playing at hide and seek in the recess; I thought I caught a glance of his hat. Well, well, recollect the pitcher that goes so often to the well, gets broke at last. Aye, aye, if these are your Devonshire tricks, you had best léave them where you found them;" and the old man continued muttering, as he closed the door.

Poor Ann's cheeks tingled with unseen blushes, as they renewed their flight, with quicker and more cautious steps.

"Thank heaven!" ejaculated Caroline, as they reached the garden where a drizzling rain was fast falling.

"Oh! my dear lady!" said Ann in a low voice, "What a melancholy night! And are you going all the way to *Greenland?*"

"Not so far I hope, Ann," replied her mistress, who in spite of agitation and distress, could not forbear smiling at the misnomer. Though, when we consider (to use a cant phrase) the number of *green-horns* that visit Gretna, it is as good a name for it as any other.

"Is it you, my life?" exclaimed Clarence as she approached the gate. Oh! there was joy, assurance, hope, and happiness in the sound; never was his voice more welcome to her ears, and she panted to fly into his arms; but on essaying to open the gate, they found it locked.

"We might have thought of this!" exclaimed Caroline, enraged at having forgotten so obvious a circumstance.

"Oh madam!" cried Ann, "Heaven is against it, or so many *obstetrications* would never have occurred. It is not too late; pray, pray, let me persuade you to return."

Alas, had Clarence stood at the everlasting gate of Paradise, in her present mood, he would have lured Caroline away, though a rosy cherubim, instead of the rain-drenched Ann, had been persuading her to the contrary.

"Put down the box end upwards," said her mistress, with a look which, could Ann have seen, would have compelled obedience without the aid of words. Caroline stepped upon it. "When I am over," she paused to say, "push the box under the gate Farewell Ann, and be faithful!" Then placing her foot in the rails of the gate, she in this manner ascended to the top, from whence she sprung into the extended arms of her grateful and adoring Clarence.

## CHAPTER XXVIII.

THE next morning the Earl of Errol was presented with Clarence's letter, which, after the conversation he had held with the Marquis de Pomenars, distressed but did not surprise him. The simple and powerful eloquence of Clarence's style, the candid and ingenuous confession that his name was assumed, but that though he had suppressed circumstances in his history, he had made no other statements that were not founded in truth, pleaded favourable for him in the kindly heart of the venerable nobleman.

He regretted the subversion of the plans which he had formed. Age had not so far chilled his heart or shut out the memory of his own youthful feelings, but that he could feel for what he imagined must be the suffering of the unfortunate young man at leaving Adela, as well as for hers at losing him; and with a mind occupied by an irrepressible wish of saving him from ruin and distress, if he could not raise him to distinction and happiness, he sent a message to the marquis, desiring the honour of his company a few moments in the library.

Clarence's letter, written before his interview with Caroline, glanced at no subject, but his own immediate situation; and the earl was reperusing it, as the marquis entered.

"I have requested the honor of this interview, my lord, to renew the subject on which we were engaged last night. Clarence, or as you call him Merteuil, has flown, and I must confess my pity pursues him. You think of him with too much severity."

"Desertion, my lord," cried the marquis, "is a crime of no common magnitude in the eyes of a soldier and a loyal subject. Murder is a still deeper one to the man and to the christian. Of both these crimes I know him to be guilty. His flight at once declares his guilt."

"Perhaps you judge him too severely. I have heard the story on which you ground the charge of murder; from his own lips 'tis true; but every word he uttered bore the stamp of truth, and in the whole of that transaction, I regard him more sinned against than sinning."

"Suppose it so," was the reply, "the first crime is still untouched by any extenuation of the second. When he enrolled himself on the list of honourable men, he should have brought that loyalty and firmness that becomes a soldier, and not have desecrated the uniform of valour, by covering a coward's heart with it."

"My lord, he is no coward. In the little time I have known, and have had occasion to observe his character, I have traced no movement of a base ignoble soul; on the contrary, he has on every occasion exhibited sentiments and conduct the most irreproachable, and at times the most praiseworthy; and that, with that unstudied carelessness which spoke it was the

habit of his mind. Clarence is no artificial character. To have preserved the uniformity which he has done, is beyond the reach of art, however skilled. You have been prejudiced against him."

"And you, my lord, are prejudiced for him; he has talent and graces; he has a specious eloquence that does much for him; and he once stood high in my favour, but all that I once admired in his character, only points him out to me a more dangerous being than he would be if less gifted. Honoured, however, as he is with your esteem, I will not do you the violence to pursue him, as perhaps the strict line of duty bids me do. He has fled, you say; peace be with him; but let him not cross my path again. In any revolution of affairs, my country would have little to thank me for, in leaving a man like him at large, among a people *naturally* hostile to her cause."

"You are warm, my lord," cried the earl, rising in imitation of the marquis; "thank heaven, the balance of power in Europe is at present pretty equal, and a fly's alighting on the beam is not likely to disturb its equiponderance."

"Her ladyship the marchioness, desires me to inform your lordship that the carriage waits," cried a servant, opening the library door.

The marquis nodded, and the domestic retired. Irritated as he felt against his noble visitor, the earl recollected he was in his own house. Smoothing his brow, he asked with as much courtesy as he could assume, if he was going to take a view of Richmond?

"No, my lord; the marchioness is so impatient to see her uncle and cousin, to say nothing of our wish not to separate Adele and Frederic, that we have determined on an immediate transit to Woburn. We shall have the honour of your company?"

"To the drawing-room, to bid the ladies farewell, certainly," replied the earl; "but it will be some days before I could conveniently leave here."

On reaching the saloon, they found the ladies in high divan, on the subject of Caroline; for Ann, faithful to her trust, had denied admittance to our heroine, Lady Milsom, and the marchioness, who had severally desired to see her.

The whole party were anxious to adjourn to Woburn, but to leave Miss Auber alone and indisposed, appeared impossible. Lady Milsom, with her usual sweetness, and willingness at self-sacrifice, proposed being left behind; but her sister and her husband would not hear of such an arrangement. Our heroine, (who traced Caroline's indisposition to the discovery which had occurred with regard to Clarence, and which had been the subject of general discussion during breakfast,) declared her intention of remaining at Richmond till Miss Auber's recovery permitted their travelling together; but the lively Adele raised an outcry against such a measure, and eloquently urged her new friend to accompany her to Woburn. Adele's voice sounded to our heroine like the call of a heavenly messenger, seconding as it did the yearnings of her heart to behold its sovereign.

"It were a crime to leave Miss Belmont behind," cried Lord Milsom; "she must have been long wea-

ried of this place, and you see the mere name of another makes her sparkle with pleasure."

"Suffer me to be arbiter in this doubtful and important case," cried the Earl of Errol; "Miss Auber is, as we all know, apt to be capricious, perhaps her present seclusion has no more serious cause; in which event, it were to be lamented, that the pleasure of many should suffer for the whim of one. She has her own maid, and may command my housekeeper, and every servant in the house; and I will myself do my utmost for her comfort; and more than all," his lordship added with a significant smile, "I will keep Mr. Chudleigh with me, to be in readiness to attend her to Woburn whenever she shall feel so inclined."

The wisdom of the plan was acknowledged by the majority of the company; but Adela, whose heart, though throbbing towards Seeton, yet deeply sympathized with Caroline, still persisted in being left behind; Lord Elmer then declared he would also remain as the coadjutor of Mr. Chudleigh. The earl was not slow to perceive, that this declaration was displeasing to her, and he thought of the unfortunate absentee, whose place he imagined his lordship assumed, kindly hoping that change of scene and society would operate to dissipate the melancholy that he did not doubt was preying with hidden venom on her heart, he again urged her joining the party. A wish to show Lord Elmer that he had nothing to hope, contributed to the facility with which she yielded; and fearful of distressing or disturbing Caroline, whom Ann had told them was disposed to sleep, they left their wishes and injunctions as to care, and an early joining them at

Woburn, with the earl and Mr. Chudleigh, hastened to make the necessary preparations, and in less than an hour Richmond was deserted.

If angels have any fun in them, says Horace Walpole, how must they laugh at us. Certainly to any being endowed with a capability of looking into the views and expectancies of the several parties that figure in the present story, all at the same moment, the combination would produce an effect highly comic; while on this side, he would behold one, busily engaged in weaving a web of the most artful and complicated texture; on that, he would observe another, as anxiously engaged in its unravelling. Thus, while Captain Auber was sketching schemes of ambition, and like Sir Giles Overreach, anxiously expecting the hour when he might hail his *honourable* daughter, she was travelling north, unsuspected and unimpeded, with a poor, proscribed, and nameless individual; every hour flying farther from the goal at which he hoped to see her arrive, and to which he imagined every hour was hastening her. It appeared to him, as if the manœuvring of years was to be suddenly rewarded by the splendid establishment of all his children.

> "Of all the causes that conspire to blind
> Man's erring judgment and misguide the mind,
> What the weak head with strongest bias rules—
> Is pride;—the never-failing vice of fools."

It is often the fate of man to feel most secure when most proximate to danger: it was the case with more than one of the residents at Woburn. Lord Egremont, who had neither received directly or indirectly any

communications with respect to Oswald and Lady Ruthven, occasionally slumbered in this fancied security; but yet with him, it was like the sleep of a feverish patient, the least thing startled him, and awoke the coward terrors of his soul. This intermitting state of uncertainty and apprehension, led him to a freer use of wine than he had ever before accustomed himself to. It served at once to banish reflection, and stimulated his spirits, though like a false friend, it often betrayed him into pain and folly, when the debauch of the night left him an invalid in the morning; while recollections of sentiments he had uttered, of tales he had related, 'rose out of chaos,' and like spectres among ruins, haunted and disturbed his mind.

An intoxication, though not the result of the intemperate use of wine, seemed also to possess Miss Egremont, who, released from the subjection in which her aunt and Lady Ruthven held her, one by the spell of interest, and the other by the force of superior intellect, grew wanton from the excess of power and of liberty. Like a vessel coming into harbour, she spread all sail, and made certain of a safe and happy anchorage. Availing herself of all that art and dress could do in aid of her person, and with manners and sentiments equally fictitious, she believed she was making herself an object of admiration and desire, to him of whose future destiny she arrogated to herself the disposal.

Thus while apparently to themselves pursuing the straight forward path of their own wishes, they were in fact travelling a contrary road; while impressed with the belief that they were drawing on with the spell of resistless attraction the *ultimatum* of their

happiness, they were really presenting the repelling point.

"Who have we here?" cried Lord Egremont, who was lounging in an ottoman near a window in the drawing-room, as the carriages with the party from Richmond drove up the avenue; "by all that's bright and beautiful on earth, Lady Milsom and the ladies of her party."

Frederic upset the chess-board on which he had been engaging an occasional visitor, and flew down stairs, before his lordship had reached the room-door; and returning a few minutes after, with the beautiful Adele, presented her to Miss Egremont, who stood in great state at the head of the room, to receive her distinguished guests.

Captain Auber advanced to his niece the marchioness, with one of his most elaborate smiles, and an urbanity of manner that was a *chef d'œuvre* of softness and sweetness. He then turned to the lovely brunette, and having paid her some elegant French compliments, he addressed himself to her father; thus successively giving every one that share of his attention, which they were entitled to from the circumstances of rank, relationship, friendship, or common courtesy.

"But where is Caroline?" he at length inquired, after having vainly expected to see her make her appearance.

"Indeed my dear uncle," replied Lady Milsom, "I blush to hear you make the inquiry. We have left her behind, and I feel so sensibly that I have acted

wrong and unkindly, that I will positively return again immediately."

The circumstance was then explained to the captain, who appeared little pleased; but the entrance of Mr. Auber diverted the conversation. The carriages, which had not yet driven from the door, had informed him of the arrivals; he therefore entered, prepared to meet the company that filled the drawing-room. His first glance was involuntarily given to Adela, but she was not the first, by many, he addressed; so much will external conduct frequently bely the hidden impulses of the heart. He soon missed Caroline, and inquired for her, and again the story was repeated, to the disconcertion of Miss Belmont and Lady Milsom, who became every moment more ashamed of their desertion.

He next (making an effort that did some violence to his feelings) asked for Clarence, and as he did so again, glanced a penetrating look at Adela, but she was so besieged by Lord Egremont, that the inquiry did not reach her. It however drew the attention of others, and Clarence and his sudden departure became the topic of conversation. The interest the circumstance excited was general; though the feeling on the occasion very different. Lord Egremont suspended the attentions of his obtrusive gallantry, to listen to an event that gave him secret satisfaction. Frederic spoke warmly in his favour, and lamented the way wardness of his fate: even Miss Egremont had a mite of praise and pity for him, while Seeton Auber knew not whether to be sad or to rejoice. He studied Adela's

countenance as much as he could without being remarked, while the subject was on the *tapis*, and he traced in it none of that depth of anguish which such an event was calculated to excite. The radiant blush of rapture that had followed his entrance, was yet upon her cheek; and though her eye softened with a tenderity, nay, though he even saw a tear glisten in its lash, there was a quiescence, a passive rather than active feeling of concern, that convinced him, notwithstanding all the appearances that had perplexed him, that Clarence was not so intimately dear to her heart as circumstances had induced him to believe.

Captain Auber, unmindful of the debt of gratitude he owed him for the preservation of his daughter's life, listened to the severe animadversions of the marquis with the utmost complacency, and remarked on the imprudence of the earl receiving an unrecommended person into his service.

"Imprudent as it may have been, sir," cried Frederic, with some disgust, "to that circumstance, to which I should rather give another term, you owe the life of your child. He saved Caroline's at the risk of his own; and how unostentatiously did he ever shun the applause and gratitude he merited."

"Well, well," cried the captain, feeling the reproof, "I believe I was never backward in acknow'edgements."

"And are they sufficient to pay a life-long debt?" mterposed Seeton, in a tone more mild but not less firm than his brother's, and with whom Clarence grew more into favour as he felt he had not to fear him as a rival: "I must confess," he added, "there

have been times when I have wished his modest merits, and his graceful talent, could stand in the stead of rank and fortune; and she whom he had saved, reward him with the sweetest recompence woman can bestow."

Again he glanced towards Adela, as the remembrance of the accident which had first introduced them to each other, shot across his mind. Their eyes met, and in that mutual and momentary period of intelligence, a volume was spoken to either heart. Gratitude for preservation, delight that *he* was the preserver, beamed in Adela's soft dark eyes, while all that present admiration, or remembered pleasure could kindle of passion and of transport burned in his.

"Great heavens!" cried the captain, forgetting himself, and yielding to the violence of sudden anger; "Profane not my ears by such a sentiment. Sooner would I see her in the grave, than see her live to give one answering thought to his presumptuous passion, if he had dared to lift his hopes so high."

Adele d'Audigné, who understood English enough to comprehend tolerably well the conversation that had passed, leaned towards Miss Belmont, as she whispered—

"*C 'est la prosperité qui donne les amis; mais c 'est l 'adversité qui les éprouve.*"

At this moment a letter was brought to the captain; looking around for permission, he broke the seal, and perused its contents with no common interest. Lady Milsom rose, and tripped to the window where her uncle stood.

"Excuse my curiosity," she cried; "but that is from Oscar, or rather I should now say, Lord Rutledge: I know the hand, and fancy I can guess the purport of the scroll."

"You have, if I mistake not," said her uncle, with a tone and appearance from which all displeasure was banished, "good reasons for guessing so cleverly. His lordship's impatience would not suffer him to complete his journey without making me acquainted with his hopes and pretensions."

"And I see you are not displeased with them;" observed his niece.

"Displeased! my dear Emilia!"

"But you may remember when I hinted the circumstance to you some time back," interrupted she, "you were not quite so complacent."

"Circumstances alter cases," replied the captain; "I shall set off for Richmond to-morrow morning, to inform Caroline of the affair myself," he added; "tell me, my dear, do you think I shall find her favourably disposed towards his lordship?"

"Nay, my dear sir, what a riddle you are proposing to me! Always incomprehensible, my cousin seems more so than ever; however, I think Oscar is better suited to her than any one who has yet been proposed. I will go with you to-morrow, my dear sir, for I am all impatience to know how she will act." Calling Lord Milsom to the conference, she made her arrangements accordingly; and soon after the ladies tripped away to their toilets.

In leaving the saloon, Adela was so delayed by her noble host, that she found herself the last and alone,

not knowing which of the dressing-rooms to appropriate; but she had scarcely paused a moment, after running up stairs, when a gentle voice, in accents familiar to her ear, asked permission to conduct her to her room; and turning to the speaker, she beheld Margaret.

Her surprise was not equal to the poor girl's pleasure, into whose eyes tears of joy spontaneously sprung.

"Oh, madam! this is what I have prayed for," she exclaimed, as soon the door of the boudoir was closed; "to see you again has been the dearest wish of my heart."

"You are very good, Margaret, to have retained so kind a remembrance of me. But by what strange circumstances do I find you here?"

"Oh! it is all owing to Mr. Auber, madam."

"Mr. Auber!" repeated Adela, as the sound of that name acted with talismanic power on her heart, and made it pendulate with increased velocity.

"Yes, madam, he has snatched me from the miserable servitude in which you saw me; and I am now the housekeeper's attendant and assistant, my chief occupation being with my needle. Oh! madam, I have now two to pray for, you and Mr. Auber; Oh! but indeed there is another person that was kind to poor Margaret, and that was Mr. Clarence. Oh! sure you have all the same spirit."

Adela checked the grateful volubility of Margaret, by again reverting to the circumstance of her finding a friend in Mr. Auber, interested in any event in which he took a part. Margaret immediately obeyed

by reverting to her own history; but she began it at a much earlier period than her lovely auditress desired, who had, however, too much good nature to check or interrupt her. Her narrative also included a sketch of Mrs. Laggon's life, especially the circumstances of distress occasioned by the imprudence of her son, and which had been the immediate cause of her removal from London. All this was listened to with anxious impatience; but at length came the scene of the night of Seeton's appearance at Mrs. Laggon's, and Adela felt herself amply rewarded in the most delightful feelings for the previous tedium of the story.

"Oh! madam," continued Margaret, "he has been so good: he sent for me yesterday morning, and says he, "Margaret, (with the sweetest voice I ever heard,) are you comfortable, Margaret? Are you happy?" Oh madam, the tears came in my eyes, and I could not answer him, and then he put his hand in his purse, (and to be sure what a hand it is, and what a manner he has with him,) and giving me some money, he told me to buy myself some ribbons. Oh! madam, don't you think he is the most beautiful creature on the earth? What eyes he has!"

"Ah!" said Adela, "they seem to love whate'er they look upon."

"Oh! madam, that's the very thing they do; but I should never have thought of saying it."

"Heaven has been kind indeed to you, Margaret, to raise you such a friend," cried Miss Belmont; "but I never shall be dressed in time for dinner to-day, I think, for nothing can I get to sit as I wish it.

I cannot endure this blue satin boddice, my colour is too high for it. I hope they have packed up something more endurable."

The high colour of which Adela complained, heightened as she thought for whom she was so fastidious in the choice and arrangement of her dress, and so sedulous about her appearance. But when her toilette was ended, she felt every reason to be satisfied with the result. A robe of the lightest texture and the purest white, fell in graceful drapery, over a figure perfectly exquisite, while the boddice and short sleeves consisting of lace and white satin, set off a neck and arms unrivalled in form and colour. A band of pearl was simply enwreathed with her bright auburn hair, which fell in careless ringlets round her neck, pearl ear-rings, white gloves, and white satin shoes, finished a dress which had little to boast in point of value, but every thing as regarded simple elegance, and unaffected grace.

At the door of the saloon, Mr. Auber met her, and contrary to her expectation, instead of finding herself the last, she was the first lady who entered the room. In fact, dressing abroad is a more tedious business than the same operation at home; a large party was also expected, for which cards had been issued above a month; all, or any of these were circumstances sufficient to account for the unusual labours of the toilette. There was no shade upon the radiant brow of Adela, as Mr. Auber led her to a seat; the sweet smile upon her lips was not the forced offspring of a melancholy heart, but the free and gentle light of a rejoicing though a timid spirit. "She does not, can-

not love that fugitive," Seeton thought; and as the certainty grew upon his heart, his compassion for Clarence's unfortunate fate augmented.

"Oh! Miss Belmont!" he cried, as he seated himself by her, "let me repay myself for my long, long exile, by snatching this opportunity of conversing with you. How have you spoiled me," he continued, taking her unresisting hand, "for other society. I may say with poor Antonio, that such a want-wit has your absence made of me,—

'That I have much ado to know myself."'

"And I," said Adela, smiling, and withdrawing her hand, "may reply with Gratiano—

'Believe me, you are marvellously changed.'

For you have grown a flatterer since we parted, and if you remember, honest sincerity and simple truth was to have been the rule of our converse."

"I believe you found me, when last we met in Lord Milsom's library, but little tinged with the fault of which you now accuse me. Have you forgiven the rudeness with which I arrogated to myself the privilege of advising you?"

"Rather ask me, if I am sufficiently grateful for an interest so kind and so considerate in my well-being, although you acted from a mistaken impression."

"I *see* I was mistaken," said he, significantly. "Oh! that poor wanderer, he has left his peace as well as hope behind him. How bitter must have been the pang with which he parted! You know, perhaps, his views as to the future; tell me, can I aid him?

Be candid, my dear Miss Belmont; you do not fear me—or doubt but I'd befriend him?"

"I would sooner doubt the rising of to-morrow's sun," replied Adela, fervently. "But indeed, I am a total stranger to his prospects, nor did I see him ere he quitted Richmond. Could I direct you, he should not long want the powerful aid your friendship might extend him."

"But you will hear from him? You were no common friends, Miss Belmont. Do you know," and again he took her hand, "he often was the object of my envy, I had almost said my fear; but *I* can have nor fear nor hope.

'Between the acting of a dreadful thing
And the first motion, all the interim is
Like a phantasma, or a hideous dream;
The genius and the mortal instruments,
Are then in council, and the state of man
Like to a little kingdom, suffers then
The nature of an insurrection.'

I have been long at war with myself and with my fortune, and at the best can be said to have barely existed excepting at sunny moments, like the present; *then* (as it is expressed when we have too much of enjoyment) I live too fast."

"Then," said Adela, smiling, as she blushed more from delight than confusion, "the equilibrium is restored."

"By no means," he rejoined. "Remember the many, many tedious days since last we met. And now do I not snatch you by the merest chance, while my very bliss is tantalized with fears of some sudden and unwelcome invasion. My terrors are already realized,"

he added, as Lord Egremont (having succeeded in breaking a conversation in which he had long been held per force) advanced to join them.

"You are in a dangerous situation, Mr. Auber," cried his lordship, throwing himself into a chair, with eyes that gazed on Adela with an expression that distressed and offended her.

"I acknowledge it, my lord; but like yourself, I am not proof against the attraction, though aware of the peril," replied Secton.

"Here comes the *talisman* that will preserve you, in the form of a young lady," said his lordship, as his daughter entered, and fancying that he had executed a joke, he finished it with a laugh.

"Are you laughing at me, papa?" said Miss Egremont, advancing with more than ordinary affectation.

"Why should you imagine so?" he answered.

"Because you looked at me the moment I entered and then began to laugh, and I cannot think there's any thing to laugh at in *me*. Secton, come this way; I want to speak to you, dear.'

Mr. Auber obeyed and they advanced up the room together, while Lord Egremont possessed himself of the seat he vacated.

"How more than beautiful you are to day," said he to Adela; whose thoughts were at that moment too much engaged to hear what he said. Those downcast eyes of rich and glowing lustre, that soft and tinted cheek, with the dark lash that sweeps its warm carnation, that swan like throat, those ivory arms, and

that voluptuous form might warm the bosom of an anchorite."

"Why, my lord," cried Sir Charles Linden, "you are giving Miss Belmont an inventory of her own charms."

"Or rather attempting it," added Lord Elmer; "it would be as difficult to enumerate, as impossible to describe them."

The arrival of some of the invited guests called Lord Egremont from his post by Adela's side, much to her relief and his own regret: and, by one of those ridiculous freaks which fortune loves to play, the person who next possessed himself of that envied place was Mr. Robert Bolton, who, with clumsy dexterity, superseded the gentle attempt of the pensive Lord Elmer.

A whisper not of the most subdued kind, in which the words "Beauty and the Beast" occurred, fell harmless on the dull ear of the offending party, who addressed himself with much self-complacency to our heroine.

"And so ma'am you're come to Woburn, *woe* to us!" winking significantly to the gentlemen near him, and chuckling at once at the wit and gallantry of the remark. "But I heard you was going to be married to the lord knows who."

"Then it will be the lord knows when," she replied good humouredly; for she preferred the stupidity of Bolton, to the strain of gallantry and compliment in which she was addressed by others, and she also knew he would be more easily displaced than any one else should Mr. Auber again join her; and she there-

fore gave him some slight encouragement to induce him to retain his place.

"And so I find," he rejoined, brightening at so favourable a reception, "you've left Miss Caroline behind you. You may be sure I wasn't sorry for *that*. Its well for me that I declared off as I did, or I should have been enticed up that there rock and toppled down again, instead of Mr. What's-his-name. Now do you know it's quite beyond me to guess how she, and that tartar her brother takes delight in such things. She treated me as if I was a dancing bear, as if I'd nothing to do but to dance to any tune she played; and Master Cut-and-thrust must persuade me it was all out of love. Yes, I dare say, a fine life I should have led! But, lord bless you, it would have been all cakes and gingerbread to *him*. He'd have come and set her on and they'd have killed me between 'em!"

"Do you really think so?" said Sir Charles; who finding himself amused was willing to feed him with an occasional remark.

"Aye, as sure as eggs are eggs!" said Bolton growing more serious as the recollections of Matlock occurred to him. "Why now only just think of me getting bruised and battered as I did down there at Lord Milsom's, where I went for a little recreation like; lots I got to be sure! Oh! you did'nt know of my trundle down the stairs did you?" he added, particularly addressing Miss Belmont.

"No," said Adela, speaking with difficulty.

"No to be sure!" said Bolton, "now I recollect I took myself off, or better say what was left of me,

without seeing any body. So now I'll tell you all about *that;*" and applying both his hands to his chair he drew it still closer to her, and then placing them on his *graceful* knees resumed his narrative.

"Why you must know I was talking to the old gentleman about his *nice quiet* son; and just telling him the *friendly* manner in which I'd been used. When all of a sudden I hears that that tiger was a coming; the captain tells me not to stir and that Frederic should make all straight; but lord *I* knew the passion he was in, so I looks about me for a place to get out at, and at last I finds one. Just as I opens one door, *he* was a-coming in at the other; so thinking of nothing but that I should be finished at last, in spite of the captain's endeavours to save me, I rushes out, and never sees a flight of stairs before me. Down I goes! bursts a door open at the bottom, and never stops till I sits squat staring in the face of a young woman, who having a parasol in her hand in her fright strikes me with that. (They none of them thought I could have enough!) Well I hollowed, and old Lady Elmer who was in the room screamed. At last her maid, (she who had given me the blow with the butt end of the parasol as I told you,) saw I was a human creature and that it was quite as well I should'nt be murdered; but I stayed for none of their consolation, but ordered the chaise and got into it as fast as I could. When, as if my death was decreed, who should dart his fiery eyes in upon me, as I sat waiting to drive off, but the maker of all the mischief, Master Frederic himself. As sure as there are plums in Christmas pudding I thought my last hour was come, but he

thought better of it, and turned up his lip as if he didn't think me worth killing, and walks himself away. You may be sure I thank'd God for my escape; but I didn't fancy myself safe till I got right into father's house in town. Now don't you think I'd a nice time of it? And, the best of it was, there wasn't a soul that didn't laugh at it as the best fun in the world."

Mr. Bolton was silent, and so were those around him, since to speak in the present state of their muscles was impossible, and the risibility of one would have been fatal to the gravity of the whole.

Finding no one inclined to make an observation, though he expected to draw largely on the sympathy of his auditory, he resumed:

"Now I'd bet any thing that Miss Caroline is staying behind for no good, she's got some scheme in her head. But Heaven make me thankful that I'm out of her way, she never let me have a bit of pleasure if she could help it. Such cursed spite! Don't you recollect," again particularly addressing Adela, "at that pretty ball, when you was *Aristides* or something, how she behaved herself. Why now, sir," he continued, turning to Sir Charles who seemed to pay him most attention, "what do you think she wanted me to be?"

"*Amphistides** perhaps," replied the baronet.

"No sir. Lord bless you she'd have thought such

* *Amphistides* was so destitute of intellect, that he seldom remembered that he ever had a parent. He was desirious of learning arithmetic, but could never comprehend beyond the figure 4.

a fine name as that thrown away upon me. Sir, she wanted me to be a common market-man, with the potatoes a top of my head, too, that I might look well, and horse-radish under my nose, and pumpkins at my back, and the lord knows what beside—all for the sake of her having *her* laugh; but I wasn't that fool neither!"

"And pray, sir," cried a stranger who had pressed into the circle, "in what character did you appear?"

"Why, let me see, *Cicero*, or *Sisyphus* wasn't it?" said he, turning to Adela.

"Zephyrsus," she replied almost suffocated.

This was the *coup-de-grace*, an attempt at a longer preservation of gravity was out of the question with every body; and Bolton was all in amazement as to what the sudden burst of merriment could have arisen from, when the company began to obey the summons to the dinner table.

Adela trembled under the apprehension of the offer of Mr. Bolton's arm, when a voice, too musical to her ear, for the peace of her heart, softly whispered—

"Give me
——————this hand
Soft as dove's down, and as white as it;"

and Mr. Auber supported her to the dining-room, and seated himself next to her, paying her the most sedulous and delicate attentions, accompanied by a general flow of urbanity and regard to those around him, which left her alone sensible of the more strict and devoted interest with which every little service was performed for her; while the occasional remark, the refined and distant compliment, came like the

perfume of the flower, and completed the fascination of his manner and conduct.

The destined bride who presided at the head of the table was not thought of, nor, what is perhaps still more wonderful, did she think of them: but the circumstance of having a duke at her right hand, may in some measure account for a neglect so unusual, especially as his grace was gay, gallant, and young.

The evening was unusually brilliant, and Adela had not for a long time even dreamed of happiness so real as she felt. The crowd of the elevated in rank, and distinguished in wealth, threw her far into the shade. Her very dress, elegant as it was, suffered from its extreme simplicity, in rooms, blazing with lights, embellished with a profusion of decorations, and crowded with ladies sparkling in diamonds and other costly gems; while white and waving plumes everywhere nodded over brows either radiant with youth and beauty, or crowned the waning charms of beings still distinguished by dignity and gracefulness. But this very circumstance which might have been subject of mortificatian to a more ambitious spirit, was one of rejoicing to Adela, since it left her more at liberty to devote her attention to the conversation of Mr. Auber, and laid her less open to observation in receiving his attentions. The dazzling maze, the hum of conversation, the fluttering of beaux, and the flirting of belles, simpering, ogling, whispering, and gallantling, employed the multitude too much to leave any at liberty to annoy her with those impertinences, to which, in a less crowded and less brilliant assembly, she might have been subject. Seeton gratefully remarked her

indifference to every object but himself, neither novelty nor brilliancy withdrew her one moment from nim: nor did the difference of her appearance among the gorgeous daughter of a better fortune cast one shade over the soul-let lustre of her enchanting eyes.

He who had loved her from the hour in which he first beheld her, gazed on her this night with increased admiration ana added love. She was the pale rose of the parterre, seeking the shade, gemmed with the dews of heaven, and breathing the perfume of love, and in her retiring beauty, and simple sweetness, outvied all the glowing exotics by which she was surrounded.

The hours flew away with magical swiftness; and at length the carriages began successively to draw up and drive off, while Seeton and Adela parted under impressions of mutual passion more vived, and more vivedly and mutually understood than at any former period. A kind of resolution, to taste of the stream in its purest sweetness that was soon, very soon to pass for ever from their lips, seemed to animate both. They appeared to think as did the poet when he sung

"To gild our dark'ning life if heaven
But one bright hour allow,
Oh! think that one bright hour is given
In all its splendour now.
Let's live it out—then sink in night,
Like waves that from the shore
One minute swell—are touch'd with light,
Then lost for ever more."

## CHAPTER XXIX.

"Would curses kill, as doth the mandrake's groan,
I would invent as better searching terms
As curst, as harsh, as horrible to hear,
Delivered strongly through my fixed teeth,
With full as many signs of deadly hate
As lean-faced envy in her loathsome cave.
Mine tongue should stumble in my earnest words,
Mine eyes should sparkle like the beaten flint,
Mine hair be fixed on end like one distracted,
Aye, every joint should seem to curse and ban"

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In spite of the lateness of the hour at which he had retired, Captain Auber rose early the following morning in order to make his fruitless visit to Richmond. But his exertions did not facilitate his departure; Sir Hubert and Lady Auber arriving just as he was on the point of setting out. He had previously persuaded Lady Milsom to relinquish her plan of bearing him company, and the arrival of her parents settled the point at once, so that, after the delay of above an hour, the captain departed post, and alone.

The fine cattle of Lord Egremont soon carried him over the forty and odd miles that intervene between Woburn and Richmond; where he found the Earl and Mr. Chudleigh seated before a good fire in the library, evidently engaged on topics that afforded them both interest and pleasure.

After the greetings, dictated by common courtesy, were over, Captain Auber inquired for his daughter.

"Why I hope," said the earl, "that we shall now be honoured with the sight of her, she has most pertinaciously persisted in keeping her room ever since, notwithstanding notes and messages from Mr. Chudleigh and myself."

"Most singular behaviour!" exclaimed the captain, as the earl rung the bell.

"Let Miss Auber be informed of the captain's arrival," said his lordship to the servant who appeared.

"Let Miss Auber also be informed that I shall attend her in her dressing-room in a few minutes," added the captain; the domestic retired: and inquiries, regarding the party at Woburn, occupied the brief interval, till Captain Auber withdrew to seek the deserted boudoir of his daughter. But he had scarcely stepped beyond the library before he was met by the returning domestic, who informed him that no answer could be obtained at Miss Auber's door. He stepped back with involuntary horror and surprise; vague feelings of something being wrong had for some time insinuated itself into his mind which the present intimation roused into giant fears. The sounds had reached the earl and Mr. Chudleigh, who both instantly started on their feet, and hastened to the captain. In a few moments the house was a scene of confusion; every body looked as if armed with a search-warrant: doors and drawers were burst, but, like the enchanted egg of *Oromazes*, they were found empty. Neither mistress nor maid were to be discovered; and the circumstance of the absence of her

jewels brought the dreadful conviction to the captain's mind that he had irrevocably lost his daughter, his *honourable* daughter. All the servants were summoned and the strictest inquiry instituted, but no one could throw any light upon the subject. Miss Auber had not been seen by any one since the evening of the day on which the marquis and marchioness had arrived, but her maid had been seen that very morning, and a strict search for that delinquent was again commenced.

In fact Ann had obeyed her mistress to the letter, and waited in a kind of stupor the bursting of the bubble, till a glance at the captain as he alighted, aroused her to a full and fearful sense of the horrors of her situation. Not deeming her life worth a barley corn in the first fury that she knew must succeed to such a discovery; she adopted a course of reasoning directly opposite to the stag in the fable, and her first thoughts turned with the admiration to her legs and to the expediency of using them. She not only had not the same reason for despising them, seeing they were a good stout pair, but she had less cause than the vain possessor of the antlers, to admire the manner in which nature had furnished her head. Putting on her cloak and bonnet she slipped out of the house as the captain entered it, and walked as if for a wager to Twickenham, where she had a friend within whose house she meant to insconce herself till the hurricane had past; well knowing that an *acsistory*, as she termed herself, never came off with a light share of punishment.

"She therefore sent out all her senses
To bring her in intelligences."

She walked along the road all eyes, ears, and toes, towing away (as a sailor would say) for a safe harbour to cast anchor in, or rather marching as resolutely as Hudibras, stimulated by terrors quite as active as those of the knight's though less formidable in array. Sometimes the footsteps of a casual passenger threw her into agonies of terror, and she stretched the sinews of her legs to cracking; the person diverged, or (if on horseback) past her, and again she breathed; but yet did not suffer herself to pause. Thinking it highly expedient to make all the sail she could, she had no mercy on her heels or elbows which acted as wings to assist her flight.

With no clue to guide him, the perplexed and distracted captain alternately appealed from the earl to Mr. Chudleigh and from Mr. Chudleigh to the earl, as to the course it was advisable for him to pursue. When the suggestion of what he had feared even to whisper to himself, that she had flown with the unfortunate Clarence, produce a paroxysm of rage fearful to behold, and he vowed in the bitterness of his soul never to forgive, never to behold her more, if such should prove to be the case. That such *was* the case the more he thought the more he felt convinced: to behold such a total wreck of the proud hopes which he fondly believed so near completion, was more than his brain could bear, and he paced the apartment almost bereft of reason; nor Lord Errol or Mr. Chudleigh could think of any thing that could afford him either hope or consolation.

"A nameless beggar! a branded fugitive!" he ejaculated with clasped hands. "She, who might have taken her place among the peeresses of the realm, the wife of a criminal! a bastard! and a vagrant! For ever do I fling her from my heart, an alien from my blood and my affections."

And striking his forehead with his hand, as if to crush the raging sense of pain, he threw himself into a chair.

"How long, my lord," he soon after exclaimed starting from his recumbent posture, "has that villain that base-born hind been gone from hence?"

"That unfortunate, and, as I now fear, that guilty young man," replied his lordship, "fled the night before last."

"Pursuit were fruitless!" gasped the captain in despair. "Two nights and almost two days, would be a start enough for a tortoise to distance its pursuers; and they, the guilty fugitives, have passed like wildfire, and long ere could I reach them, nothing would be left for me but vengeance. A thousand confirmations now come thronging on my thoughts; but harassed by other hopes and fears, I did not sufficiently guard that avenue to my honour and my happiness. Let her go," cried the unhappy parent after a pause, and in a voice of fearful calmness, "let her go. Cursed be the hour of her birth, and partner of her guilt—never may my eyes behold her more! Never may I hear her name! My lord I will relieve you of my presence. My state of mind is my apology—"

"Captain Auber," interrupted the earl, "it is im-

possible to express what I feel on this unfortunate occasion. I cannot excuse the folly of the one or the guilt of the other of those unfortunate fugitives; yet something may be pleaded in extenuation—"

"Attempt it not, my lord," now in his turn interrupted the captain; "my mind cannot bear the subject, still less a palliation of enormity so unthought of. I have *no* daughter. I will endeavour to forget I ever had one. I will return to my remaining children. Once again I shall speak of her to hold her up to them a terrible example of disobedience, and then I'll interdict her branded name, and suffer none to breathe its poison on my ear again. Farewell, my lord.—Mr. Chudleigh once I thought—but 'tis madness to think now—farewell!"

Vainly they attempted to persuade him to stay till his feelings were more calmed. He replied that repose was incompatible with the tumult of his soul. Again he bade them adieu, descended the stairs with a heavy rapid tread, paused to give some orders to the postillion and drove furiously away.

For some time after the captain's departure the gentlemen sat in silence, as if newly awakened from a dream of which they were endeavouring to collect the strange and scattered recollections: till gradually they broke into exclamation, and the recent events became the subject of a conversation of intense interest. In which the characters of Clarence and Caroline were canvassed, and the history of the former as far as it was known reviewed. Mr. Chudleigh gave a sketch of his own attachment for Miss Auber, with so much sense and feeling, divested of all maudlin sentimen-

tallity, that it sensibly touched the earl; who adroitly led him from the subject, by introducing observations on our heroine as connected with the views he had entertained with regard to her and Clarence, and he thence launched at once into the history and character of her father; thus, with the good intention that emanated from a generous heart, withdrawing his young companion from reflections as painful as they were unavailing.

Leaving them thus téte à téte, and the captain on his return to Woburn to keep guard that his sons did not diverge from the line of interest or duty, and Clarence and Caroline on the high road, or rather the cross road to matrimony, we will turn our eyes to our old friend Mrs. Belmont, the sweet mother of our beautiful heroine.

It was a gusty evening, and the light of a good fire shed its red gleam on the figure of that lady, as she sat alone and in a meditative mood without candles conjuring up images of the past, when the sound of a carriage driving to the door startled her from her reverie. The first idea that flashed upon her mind was, that Adela had suddenly returned, and all the mother kindled in her heart; but on opening the room door she heard her name mentioned by a female voice with which she was unacquainted, and she returned to her seat and rung for lights, conjecturing, during the interval, what the visit might portend. At first she thought, though not her daughter, it might be some one from her; but all apprehension that the messenger was the bearer of ill-tidings was banished from her mind, as

she recalled her recent letters, breathing not more of filial love than of assurances of health and happiness.

Alice appeared in a few minutes with lights, heralding a tall commanding woman, of the most elegant deportment and distinguished stile of dress; but whose pale countenance appeared the effect of recent indisposition and fatigue.

"I have the honour of speaking to Mrs. Belmont," cried the stranger as the maid withdrew; "those who have ever beheld the daughter cannot have a moment's doubt; there is no difference, but the shadow that time has feebly thrown upon you."

Mrs. Belmont's countenance beamed the delight she felt at this allusion to her child, and the resemblance there existed between them. A striking likeness is always a flattering circumstance to the self-love of a parent, it is an indubitable certificate of birth; a compliment, the sincerity of which cannot be doubted; and seems to mark more definitely and strongly the endearing relationship that subsists in that purest and (on one side at least) strongest of natural ties.

"I may not venture to surmise whom it is I have the honour of receiving," she cried; "but she can have no better passport to my heart and home than coming from that dear and only child."

"I am not immediately or directly from her," rejoined the visitor, "or I should probably have been furnished with credentials more interest and satisfactory than mere verbal expressions. But not to keep you longer in suspense—perhaps Miss Belmont may

have mentioned, among the number of her friends, Lady Ruthven."

Mrs. Belmont bowed in acquiescence, and her ladyship preceded.

"Nor is that title in *my* instance merely nominal—the synonyme of acquaintance; but one that I shall bear out by proving that I am the friend I profess to be."

"Your ladyship's manner is so solemn," cried the fond mother, "that you must pardon me if my anxiety supersedes my gratitude, and that I inquire if there is more than usual occasion for the exercise of friendship?"

"Be not alarmed, madam, Miss Belmont is I believe well and happy; but nevertheless her situation is one that presents a fair field for the exertions of a friend, who has both the power and the will to serve her; she has foes to be guarded against—she has rights to be recognized. The first lie in ambush, like the skulking tiger, waiting its opportunity to spring and to devour—the latter are shrouded in obscurity."

"Pardon my interrupting you," exclaimed Mrs. Belmont, with looks and tones that betrayed her agitation; "but let me know how far my child is in the power of the foes you mention, how she may be snatched from them; all else is secondary, if not wholly visionary."

"I see I have alarmed your fears," cried Lady Ruthven; "but you have no *immediate* cause for them: your daughter is at present under the protection of the earl of Errol at his villa at Richmond, surrounded by the noble and the honourable, and distant from the

lurking mischief I allude to. It is to bring you to her aid at the timely moment, that you may snatch her from the snare laid for her that I am here.

"Madam!" ejaculated Mrs. Belmont catching Lady Ruthven's hand, "how can a mother's heart find language sufficiently powerful for the thanks that you merit?"

"Spare yourself the effort, my dear madam. I ask of you but to suffer me to guide you—and I will point the spot where lies this lurker: and more, I will lay bare the place where you may send your shaft deep, deep into his heart, and deal your vengeance on the injurer."

Mrs. Belmont started at the violence with which her new friend ground forth the last words from between her white teeth; while some apprehensions, as to the purity and disinterestedness, nay, even the sanity of the motives, which led her into Wales, stole into her mind.

"Nor," resumed Lady Ruthven, "shall the rights, the claims of which you seem to think so lightly be poorly answered. I will tear down the rampart guilt has raised around a structure, reared by all the congregated vices, reared round a temple consecrated to crime. I will rend away the veil that shrouds imposture, and on the pedestal, from which I strike the charlatan, I'll place your daughter,—the dominatress of the wrested rights."

Violence ever defeats its own aim. Instead of gaining, Lady Ruthven lost ground with Mrs. Belmont; who began to look, first with doubt as to the wisdom, and then with distrust as to the views which guided

her offers. She marked the fading interest of her hostess, and she also knew to what to attribute it; yet so little command had she of the violent passions that tore her mind like the conflict of opposing elements, that she could not speak on the subject that engrossed her thoughts otherwise than violently. Trusting much to the nature and importance of the points she should present to view, when she entered at large on the disclosure she meant to make, she veiled the disappointment she experienced from Mrs. Belmont's lukewarm manner of meeting proposals so pregnant with consequences, and complained of fatigue.

"In the morning, my dear madam," she cried, "I will inform you of every thing that has been the motive and the stimulant to this visit, which would have been sooner paid, had not an indisposition, from which I am only just barely recovered, retarded my design."

Mrs. Belmont would have gone herself to superintend the arrangements for the accommodation of her striking and unexpected guest, but Lady Ruthven prevented her, alleging that she had brought an attendant, who would assist Mrs. Belmont's domestic, and render unnecessary that superintendance which country servants generally require; then giving another half hour to the common-place nothings of polite conversation, her ladyship rose and wished Mrs. Belmont good-night, reminding her of the topics of interest to which the morning was to be devoted.

The absence of Lady Ruthven left Mrs. Belmont to meditation. She felt less inclined than she did at first to indulge fears on her child's account; but the mention of her rights, alienated and dormant as they had

long been, awakened a variety of feelings, none however allied to hope or ambition. That which her husband had never obtained, she did not much expect to see her daughter possessed of: and she was ignorant of the extent to which his interests had suffered, through that supineness and a disgust with life which had, in the closing years of his existence, overtaken him. He was so much her senior, had past through such a variety of scenes, estranged his friends, and determined his fortune so completely before they met, that he brought her but the wreck of his former self. To recur to the past was painful, he therefore never made her strictly acquainted with the circumstances or connections of his early history; to many even of the passing events she was a stranger, unless their termination created some necessity for her being informed of them. This misjudged, not to say culpable, want of confidence, which so many observe towards their wives, is frequently the fruitful source of much domestic misfortune, depriving the wife of her best guide in the conduct of her affairs during the life of her husband, and leaving her in a lamentable state of ignorance in the event of his death, an ignorance often fatal to the interest of his offspring and the honour of his memory.

In Mr. Belmont this want of confidence arose from no doubt of either the fortitude or the discretion of his wife, but merely from an irritability of temper that could not bear the tedium of detail, and a consciousness of error and imprudence which made any review too painful to be voluntarily entered on. To such, as were acquainted with the circumstances attached to

his family and fortunes, to whom a hint would suffice, and a remote allusion be intelligible, he might occasionally address remarks that glanced at early hopes and former connections, and with those he loved to indulge the bitterness of caustic satire and severe invective; but with such, as a more recent connection had given no insight into his early career, he studiously avoided all reminiscence.

Thus Mrs. Belmont knew little more than that he had involved his property before he came of age, and finally deprived himself of all benefit from it afterwards: his father taking what advantages the law allowed him to will it away, after he had relieved a great part of it of the incumbrances with which his son's inconsiderate folly and extravagance had charged it. She had also some vague notions of his having other rights and expectancies besides those exclusively paternal, but as to their nature and extent she had no definite idea. She therefore looked forward to the interview with her guest with more curiosity than either expectation or anxiety. And had she even entertained a hope of realizing the golden dreams of fortune for Adela, she had arrived at that state of philosophy, which is the general result of the experience of life, as to have been enabled to cultivate the certainty with great equanimity.

All her reflections ended in a meek and fervent appeal to the universal parent, to direct events according to his will, and to endow her with submission to meet his behests. For Adela she asked, if such were consistent with those inscrutable decrees, the calm and peaceful tenor of sequestered life; but if pros-

perity and distinction were to be her destiny that it might not inflate her mind with worldly pride, nor withdraw her from the straight gate and narrow way which leads to eternal life; that if adversity were to mark her fate, that she might be blest with that meek and quiet spirit, that patient submission, which pours oil upon the waves of life's tempestuous sea; and thus, after a communion with the spirit of God,—the elevation of her soul in prayer, she sunk, as if shadowed by the wings of hovering angels. to a calm unbroken rest.

Far differently passed the same hours with the turbulent Lady Ruthven, whose fevered pulses beat with a desire for vengeance, whose sighs were those of disappointed pride and wrecked ambition. The remnant of the fever that had detained her in Scotland still hung about her, nor did her mind ever suffer her to taste that repose, which would be the best preservative from the secret ravages it was making on her constitution. The sedative of religion was unknown to her, the lenient precepts of that divine spirit which teaches forgiveness of injuries, had never poured one holy balm drop on her burning heart. With a gifted intellect and strong passions, her mind was like the arid soil that throws forth poisons. The lights of her genius were the *ignis fatuus* of a clime teeming with unwholesome exhalations. Her very gaiety was like the flash of the lightning, which, though harmless at the moment, might, under circumstances of excitement, bring down the red bolt of vengeance, as easily as the light scintillations of merriment: the sunshine of cheerfulness, the rainbow hues of an innocent and

elegant fancy were unknown to her happy hours, while those of a more sombre cast were marked by a gloom, such as denotes the approach of the tempest, when the thunder-clouds roll dark and heavy on the lowering horizon.

So opposite were the two individuals that met at breakfast the following morning. Mrs. Belmont in her white wrapping gown, just the middle size, and full of the gentle gracefulness that became her years, and belonged to her style of beauty: Lady Ruthven in a morning-robe of damask silk, which adorned a form tall, elegant, and of an air the most commanding. As they met, they were mutually struck with the strong contrast each presented to the other. Mrs. Belmont's smile lit a pair of rich brown eyes with a serene lustre, and dimpled round a mouth that was the very home of sweetness and good humour: Lady Ruthven smiled too, but it was the restricted smile of artificial feeling, which effected no change in her sloe black eye, and scarcely softened the proud expression of her finely formed lip. The one reposed upon her seat like *Latona*, still beautiful and gentle, though the object of many sorrows and many persecutions, and as if her present calm might at any moment be changed to tears, but scarcely be animated to resistance: Lady Ruthven looked like the haughty *Niobe*, with all the legion of proud passions lying at her heart, more prone to combat than to yield, to command than to obey.

Her ladyship gradually led the conversation to Italy, and drew Mrs. Belmont into some detail of her early life; and then, by a natural consequence, they dropped

into the very channel in which it was desirable the conversation should flow.

"You must remember," cried Lady Ruthven a little angry at the small insight Mrs. Belmont exhibited as to her husbands affairs, "to have heard mention of a Mr. Noel."

"No, indeed," she replied; "sometimes I used to hear names mentioned, when Mr. Belmont was conversing with Sir Reginald Hampton."

"Ah!" interrupted her ladyship, "the brother of the earl of Errol."

"The same," resumed Mrs. Belmont. "But as I never was made a party to those conversations, and I saw the unhappy effect they had on Mr. Belmont's temper and spirits, so far from seeking to comprehend or encourage them, I invariably drew him away when ever I could."

"Then, Madam, I will inform you who this Mr. Noel was, and then I will also acquaint you of what he *is*. Mark my information for you can use it to your best purpose—he must be reminded of the past, and undeceived as to the present."

"I have not yet got hold of the clue," cried Mrs. Belmont, "but I will patiently follow your ladyship through the labyrinth, were it but to ascertain to what it leads."

"To results believe me the most proud to you, the most fearful to your foe—but to proceed. Mr. Noel, the illegitimate offspring of Mr. Percy Noel your husband's first cousin, is the individual of whom I speak. He lived beneath his father's roof and bore his name till his tenth year, when death deprived him of his

natural protector. His state was one of great destitution; the heir at law claiming what little the expensive habits of a drunken sportsman had left, after the necessary expenses of returning him to the clod from whence he sprung. The mother of the boy, who had been a servant in the house, had long since left the country, and young Noel ran a fair chance of becoming a pauper or something worse, when Mr. Belmont's father was made acquainted with the orphan's melancholy fate, and stretched forth to him the hand of aid. He took the boy home, gave him the same advantages that his own son enjoyed, and flattered himself he was rearing a faithful friend for that only child, and thus supplying to him the want of the fraternal tie. How fallacious is human reasoning, how false are all our hopes, instead of a son he cherished a serpent: instead of an associate, endeared to Horatio Belmont by the double motive of gratitude and affection, he was rearing the foe of his son's future life, the usurper of his rights and privileges. I will not fatigue and distress you with details of the arts and villanies by which he blackened the character of the unsuspicious Horatio. I have a document which circumstances have thrown into my hand, which will better develope the demon character of Noel than I can now pause to do. It is sufficient for the present to remark, that he was the chief instrument of the banishment of an only son from the home and heart of an unhappy father. He led the victim of his machination into the path of error, (which a love of pleasure made him too facile in treading,) and having done so he barred his return, denying him the power

of expressing or making known his penitence, and willingness to retrace his steps.

This line of conduct through a series of years, in which he pretended to supply to the father the place of the renegade son, and affected to the son to be the intercessor with an obdurate father, furnished him with a perfect knowledge of all the family secrets, and enabled him to mature the plans by which he ultimately superseded the child of his benefactor. At the death of your father-in-law, madam, he was discovered to be his heir—that will was a forgery. From that hour he advanced with rapid strides, and Mr. Belmont's absence from England left him undisputed master of the field. Reports injurious to Mr. Belmont's character were industriously spread, followed by others of his death; so that, on the dissolution of your husband's uncle, with no one to dispute or inquire into his claim, he stepped into the vacant place and became Lord Egremont."

"Lord Egremont!" repeated Mrs. Belmont, "the future father of Mr. Auber?"

"The same," cried Lady Ruthven.

"But, my dear madam, I remember hearing of no uncle of Mr. Belmont's but the old baron of Leswick—"

"Who subsequently assumed the title of Egremont," interrupted Lady Ruthven; "all that, my dear madam. shall be explained to you. Do you now see how far you are interested in what I have already revealed?"

"Yes," answered Mrs. Belmont, "he is holding the place my daughter ought to fill. He must have been aware of that the moment he beheld her. Did

he feel nothing towards the dear girl? no remorse for the rights he usurped? no yearnings towards the same blood, for legitimate or illegitimate still they are cousins?"

"Yes, I will tell you what he felt—a paralysis of the heart from terror, though not from remorse; but the well practiced dissembler betrayed it not to her, nor any one beside *involuntarily*. Since then another feeling has grown into his heart."

Dreadful was the light that gleamed in the eyes of the narratress, as the ground of her vengeance against her perfidious paramour was thus recalled to her mind.

"Yet, my dear madam, you have other debts to Lord Egremont besides those of which I have already informed you. In him you behold not merely the early foe of your husband, the ungrateful usurper of his honours and his fortune, the defamer of his name, and the destroyer of his peace; but you behold in him the wretch that meditates the seduction of your daughter—you behold in him the murderer of your son!—your first born!"

Mrs. Belmont sunk back in her chair, and Lady Ruthven was apprehensive she would have fainted; but a sensation much more painful held her speechless. Alice, who had answered the summons of the parlour bell, flew to her mistress with anxious solicitude, so colourless was the face, so rigid the features of that unfortunate lady, on whom a sudden revulsion of thoughts and feelings had brought back the most painful passage of her existence, accompanied with circumstances which increased their effect tenfold.

As soon as she obtained the power of utterance she dismissed the attendant, and with a convulsed lip, to which the colour had not yet returned, entreated Lady Ruthven to proceed—who continued,

"However unconscious Mr. Belmont might have been of it, he was never otherwise than surrounded by the emissaries of his enemy. The circumstance of his marriage was one of the most appalling nature to the usurper, whose machinations would have prevented its completion, (as he had done in similar events before,) but that your union was a secret one. The innocent fruit of your love now became as much an object of his dread as your husband. I will not dwell on an event so harrowing—I need only say to his agency you owe the cruel deprivation of your child!"

"How did they destroy it?" cried the agonized mother, "could the inhuman monsters consign it living to the flames—?"

"Moderate this excess of feeling, my dear madam," said Lady Ruthven making an attempt to soothe the sufferer, "I know not the particulars—I only know the child was sacrificed at his instigation, and he rewarded the doers of the deed."

"Oh! merciful God!" exclaimed the gasping Mrs. Belmont, "what a tale for a mother's ear—my babe! my boy! my little martyr!" and covering her face with her handkerchief, she yielded to an agony of tears.

Lady Ruthven though not much of a philanthropist, was enough of a physiologist, to know that tears are the best relief of a surcharged heart; she therefore suffered Mrs. Belmont's to flow without interruption,

and without shedding one in sympathy with her. At length, as a new burst of anguish every now and then seemed to evince an increase rather than a decrease of her sorrow, she recalled the mourning mother from the memory of the dead, to the retributive punishment due to the living.

"Summon your fortitude, my dear Mrs. Belmont," cried her ladyship, "you cannot recall, but you may revenge your child."

"Oh! will that repay me for the pangs it felt, my little white-limbed dove!—Oh! when I kissed him and held him to receive his father's kisses, could I think it was for the last, last time.—His caressing hand clung to me as if to say, 'dear mother do not leave me!' *but I left him!* my boy, my appealing babe! my lost, my murdered little one!"

Mrs. Belmont's emotion began now to infringe on the patience of Lady Ruthven, who therefore tried another avenue by which to recall her from fruitless lamentation.

"The one you mourn, my dear madam, is now safe, beyond the reach of further injury; not so the one you've left—Miss Belmont calls upon you to protect her innocence to assert her rights—"

"You are right, madam," cried Mrs. Belmont drying her eyes, "I must rouse myself to act, not sit down supinely to nurse the sorrows that no time can heal. Tell me, guide me, Lady Ruthven, my life has been a series of emotions, I have known what it is to feel in all its various wild acuteness, but I am new to the determinate exertion necessary to the conduct of an affair like this.

"Rely on me, dear madam," cried Lady Ruthven, delighted to find her become more calm and reasonable, "I will undertake your conduct through these quicksands. Your daughter shall be invested with the immense fortune which has been so long appropriated to the use of infamy and crime—"

"When shall we leave here?" inquired Mrs. Belmont. "I am on the rack till I behold my one remaining child safe from the toils of the destroyer."

"Do not entertain any present apprehension to disturb you. Miss Belmont is at present safe—doubt not but at the necessary moment protection shall be near, you shall be yourself the guardian; and, as you hold the shield o'er her, shall you discharge your shaft at *him!*—You shall meet him in mid career; like a goaded beast he shall run upon the lance, and you shall toss him high to meet the scoff of loud derision; then hurl him down, trample him and blight him!"

Lady Ruthven's face grew livid with the intensity of her feelings, and again Mrs. Belmont was held for a moment on a poise as she asked herself, was she to be a principal in the scenes that were shortly to be acted, or was she to be an instrument in that violent woman's hands! but the vital interest that agitated her heart soon silenced this tone of reasoning as Lady Ruthven resumed.

"I hourly expect to be joined by a gentleman of the name of Oswald, who can inform you better than I can of all you desire to know. He is devoted to my interest, and consequently to yours. He will arm you with the barbed darts to strike into this *Abimelech;* like the woman of *Thebez* I will watch my opportu-

nity to hurl the stone of destruction at his head, and at last, like *Haman*, we will hang him on the gallows a mockery and an example!"

The tones and the expressions which gave soul to Lady Ruthven's language, horrified the gentler spirit of Mrs. Belmont, who was at all times more ready to mourn over the injured, than to pursue the injurer. To snatch her child to her arms in safety, occupied more of her thoughts than the punishment of the guilty meditator of her ruin; while for the crimes which he had already perpetrated, she awfully felt that there was an offended God, at the bar of whose judgment he must appear, where the spirits of her persecuted husband and of her innocent babe would appear against him.

"Unhappy, guilty wretch!" exclaimed Mrs. Belmont, "there is no severity he does not merit at my hands; but if I rescue Adela, and he restores only a part of her rights, I should feel half inclined to leave him to repentance, rather than to hold him forth to the world the monster that he is."

Lady Ruthven listened from mere inability to stop her; so great was her astonishment at what she termed the tameness of Mrs. Belmont's nature, and so great was her rage at finding herself linked to so ineffective an agent in the dire work of destruction she was planning.

"Great Heaven!" she at length ejaculated, "have you a soul? Do you remember that you have a daughter? In your place I would tear his heart from its seat—and drain the vital current of his life to quench my thirst of vengeance. Think of the crime on

crime that he has perpetrated—think on your devoted daughter."

"Do not imagine," cried Mrs. Belmont, "that I need a stimulus to save my child. Woe betide the being that would injure her. You tell me I shall save her—I have a trust in Heaven that I shall—and has not that dark criminal a daughter too? unhappy girl! ignorant as innocent of her father's crimes—you would not involve her in his punishment? ingulf her in his ruin?"

"Why not?" furiously interrogated Lady Ruthven, "she is as wicked as one so weak can be. A little scorpion with a feeble sting—the will, without the power of guilt. She's tried to sting *your* daughter. No, she shall fall with him—I hate the fool! She the wife of Seeton Auber! Would I leave her father such a triumph? Never! How came that princely brow to stoop for such a nuptial wreath as *that* nonentity could crown him with! Oh! there shall be a glorious ceremony. Not the dull common rites that churchmen babble. The consecrated lights shall burn around us, and silver censers fling their incense high—the chalice shall be brimmed, but not with wine. I will lay the offering on the altar—there shall be no bride, but an accuser—no bridegroom, but in his place a pallid felon, a reeking murderer—there shall be music—not an anthem, but a dirge—there shall be bells sounding, not peals, but knells!"

And then bursting into a violent and hysterical laugh, she rushed from the room. The certainty that she was mad painfully overcame Mrs. Belmont, who began to think that all to which she had been listen

ing, and which she had suffered so much to affect her, had been nothing more than the ravings of an unsettled brain; impressed with this conviction she hastily followed her, but finding she had retired to her room and that her servant was in attendance upon her, Mrs. Belmont gladly withdrew to her own to endeavour to calm her shattered nerves and to collect her thoughts.

## CHAPTER XXX.

"Oh! Hope, sweet flatterer, whose delusive touch
Sheds on afflicted minds the balm of comfort;
Relieves the load of poverty; sustains
The captive bending with the weight of bonds,
And smoothes the pillow of disease and pain;
Send back th' exploring messenger with joy,
And let me hail thee from that friendly grove."

GLOVER.

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During several days, in which Lady Ruthven hourly expected the arrival of Oswald, she occupied herself and Mrs. Belmont in looking over papers, and arranging the evidence against Lord Egremont. These documents, and the systematic conduct of her coadjutrix convinced her of the reality of the dreadful disclosure that had been made, and increased her impatience to fly to her child, a letter from whom discovered the change of her residence from Richmond to Woburn. But Lady Ruthven soothed her fears, and implored her to wait the arrival of Oswald, who she assured her was laying every thing in a proper train, and would be with them the moment all was prepared. As to any danger to Miss Belmont, while under the care of Lady Milsom, in the midst of uch a society, and whilst the culprit was engaged as

he was with company and the expectation of his daughter's nuptials, she argued so skilfully against such a possibility that she induced Mrs. Belmont to acquiesce, and yield herself entirely to her agency.

More than a week had elapsed since Lady Ruthven's arrival, when once more the sound of a carriage disturbed the peaceful echoes of Mrs. Belmont's abode; she was seated with her ladyship in the drawing room, still conversing on the subject that now occupied all their thoughts, when the coach stopped at the door.

"It is Oswald at last," cried Lady Ruthven as she impatiently waited the announcement: but the information that a stranger desired to speak with Mrs. Belmont dissipated that hope.

"Have you no idea who it is?" said Mrs. Belmont as she rose to leave the room.

"It's a lady, ma'am, and I thought I *knowed* the voice; but I hav'nt *seed* her, so I can't pretend to say—"

Her mistress had passed her before she had drawled forth so much, and descended to the parlour full of conjectures, and not without fears. On entering she beheld a tall figure in a riding-dress which by the dim unsnuffed candle Alice had placed on the table, she did not immediately recognize to be Caroline.

"Miss Auber!" she ejaculated in tones of affectionate surprize, as the young lady advanced to embrace her; "but alone, unattended, in tears too, how is this?"

"Oh! my dear madam, you do not know the wretchedness of my situation! you will condemn the

step I have taken, but oh! you must pity the consequences that have ensued."

"Great Heaven! how you terrify me, my dear Caroline, what has thus bowed you? What is the step you have taken?"

"My dearest madam, I am a wife—I had scarcely been such three days when my husband was torn from my arms, under a charge that perils his life. The poor consolation of sharing a prison with him was denied me. They have borne him I scarce know whither, and I obey his last injunction in seeking a refuge with you."

"With me?" repeated the amazed and agitated Mrs. Belmont, "do I then know him?"

"No, dearest madam, but he knows you by report, and he knows Adela. It had been my original intention to have sojourned with you a short time, and all those considerations induced him to urge my flying to you, or it was my intention to have followed him to the metropolis, whither I understand he is to be conducted. Oh! you will let me remain till he writes—dear Mrs. Belmont, you will not discard me? When you know all—when you know him to whom my destiny is united, you will not blame me."

Her tears fell fast upon Mrs. Belmont's hand, who soothed her with maternal tenderness, assuring her of protection as long as she would accept or might require it. She then informed her of the circumstance of Lady Ruthven being in the house, and inquired if she had any objection to see her.

"None in the world," replied Caroline, becoming more composed from the tenderness and support she

met from Mrs. Belmont, she may as well hear my story from my own lips as from the mouth of another. We will join her therefore if you please."

But ere they could leave the parlour the arrival of Oswald determined their remaining where they were. He ascended with a rapid step to the drawing-room where sat Lady Ruthven: as Mrs. Belmont was well aware of the subjects of deep interest they had to discuss, she called to Alice to improve the fire and bring better lights, and prepared to pass the remainder of the evening with the unhappy bride.

The few necessary arrangements were soon made, and the room assumed a greater appearance of comfort than when it was first entered. Caroline disincumbered herself of her hat and habit, and tea being ordered, as the thing which would best refresh her, she sat down with Mrs. Belmont as with a mother.

The subject that first naturally came upon the tapis was the history of her flight, which she described as uninterrupted. They reached Dumfrieshire in safety and good spirits; but after the marriage, and the necessity that impelled her no longer existed, Caroline began to feel the effects of a long journey and anxiety of mind; therefore under a natural but unfortunate anxiety for her health, Clarence insisted on a short stay at Gretna.

"But, alas, my dear madam," she continued, "the peace and repose he was so anxious to secure me was not to be my lot. It was about twelve in the forenoon, and I was seated at the window of our lodgings with my hand in his, recalling the trepidation with which at that hour three days before I had gone

through the ceremony which was to fix the destiny of my future life, when a post-chaise which bore all the marks of a hasty journey passed the door.

"More fugitives," said I; "and Clarence rose, observing he would go and learn who they were, or at least get a sight of them. I laughed at his curiosity, but suffered him to go. Alas! he returned no more. A note informing me that he was under arrest, induced me to fly to him. He was in the custody of two men. It appears my father had himself visited Richmond and discovered my flight; hopeless of overtaking me, he at first thought of renouncing us for ever; but the desire of revenge at length obtained the mastery, and hastening to London he procured a couple of police officers; with these he dispatched his servant (from whom I learned these particulars) to identify the person of Clarence, while he returned himself to the Marquis de Pomenars to take measures for having my husband surrendered up to France, to meet the event of a court-martial. When this dreadful information was imparted, and which was done as if with a view of increasing my agony of mind, and as if to do so was among the articles of instruction; I threw myself on the neck of Clarence, and oh! exhausted as I am from successive days of weeping, I will not even attempt to sketch the scene."

Mrs. Belmont, who had experienced a situation nearly similar, did not need the eloquence of description to extract the tear of sympathy. Drawing Caroline to her, she kissed her with tender emotion, and the soothed and gratified sufferer resumed her narrative.

"What shall give you an idea of my feelings when Clarence was gone? The agony of our parting scene had left me more dead than alive: while the apprehensions for the future, which arose in terrible array before me, exhausted the little strength I had left. I found it impossible to set out immediately as I wished; I was obliged to postpone it to the next day, and go to bed. The next day came, and after what a night! but another delay arose, I could procure no horses. I thought in the petulance of my distress I should never reach you; but I am here at last, thank Heaven! Oh! were *he* here with me, I should not have a wish ungratified."

The next topic that engaged them, was the history of the unfortunate Clarence, as Mrs. Belmont's curiosity was excited in no common degree to know all that was connected with the husband of a being so interesting and so endeared as Caroline; and the young and unhappy bride could speak on no other subject. Bitterly did Mrs. Belmont weep throughout the narration, and lament the evil destiny which seemed to pursue the unhappy and persecuted Clarence.

"Well, my dear child," cried Mrs. Belmont as the story came to its close, "I can only counsel you to trust in that power who disposes all events. He will I hope direct those of your fortune to a happy termination. Your husband, it appears, my love is known to your family by the name of Clarence, in the army he bore that of Merteuil. What is his real name?"

"His real name," replied Caroline, "is Clarence D'Arley. On effecting his escape from college, in order to avoid the monkish habit, he assumed that of

Merteuil, the name of the school-fellow who received and assisted him. Under that name he entered the army; but on his subsequent desertion and escape to England, he resumed his baptismal, dropping only his surname. All deception is now unnecessary, and he of course returns to his original designation."

Many had been the attempts on the part of Mrs. Belmont to induce the fair and weary traveller to retire; but she did not succeed till Caroline had nothing more left to communicate. As soon as she had seen her in comfortable possession of the half of her bed, Mrs. Belmont kindly kissed her, closed the curtains, and softly descended the stairs. The voices of Oswald and Lady Ruthven were still sounding in the tones of unwearied animation; she was going to pass the drawing-room without interrupting them, when Alice informed her that Lady Ruthven had long wished to see her.

"I thought you would never be disengaged, my dear madam," cried her ladyship, rising as she entered, and presenting Oswald; "but my friend would not depart without seeing you. Did I not tell you," she added, "he was not idle in the cause we are upon? He has made discoveries that are worth an empire."

"If they but purchase me the only empire that *I* covet, I am richly paid," replied Oswald as he gazed on the brilliant and beautiful Lady Ruthven with the most expressive passion.

On entering, Mrs. Belmont's first thoughts had been directed to the study of Oswald; associated as he was to be with her, and the fortunes of her child, he was a

person of no common interest. He appeared to be a man verging towards forty, scarcely above the middle size, and athletic; his countenance was marked and rather handsome, with a clear grey eye of singular intelligence. Upon the whole he had an appearance calculated to prepossess, but for a certain something sinister and artful in the expression of his countenance.

"I think," he resumed, "I have introduced London hours into a place hitherto a stranger to them. Now I have had the pleasure of seeing Mrs. Belmont, I will not increase the fatigue you both evince, ladies: but say farewell."

"We shall see you to-morrow early?" cried Lady Ruthven with a flattering anxiousness.

"How early?" he inquired as he took her hand.

"To breakfast," she replied. He bowed, kissed the hand he held, and with the most marked respect to Mrs. Belmont, departed.

Mrs. Belmont just paused to mention the arrival of Caroline, but not suffering details of any kind to be entered on, the ladies immediately separated for the night.

Fatigue and exhausted spirits had mutually conduced to throw the young and unfortunate bride into a profound sleep. Mrs. Belmont stood to gaze upon her with admiration and compassion; all the haughty traits of her countenance were softened by repose and sorrow; a tear was on her cheek which was pale as the pillow on which her head rested, and which was strikingly contrasted by the few dark curls that stole

from under her cap. Her hands were clasped as if she had gone to sleep in prayer, while the expression of her mouth spoke the deep melancholy which even in slumber weighed upon her heart.

As Mrs. Belmont looked at her, the large drops kept collecting and falling from her eyes; they were those silent distinct tears which may be counted, and are like the few and heavy drops which sometimes in summer precede a storm, when there is an unearthly calm, and solemn gloom. They sprung as much from memory as from pity. In such exhausted sleep, so pale, so worn, had she too laid, when Belmont was torn from her; and while she drew a parallel between herself and Caroline, she could not forbear doing the same between Clarence and him who had been the object of her early love and long regret. The coincidence, assisted by an imagination time could not dim, and feelings that it could not chill, created in her breast an interest for the unknown Clarence that partook of all the romantic ardour of her nature.

The following morning Oswald was punctual to his appointment, and made a third at Mrs. Belmont's breakfast table; but they had scarcely discussed their first cups of tea when Caroline made her appearance.

Mrs. Belmont gently chid her for the effort she had made, in rising so soon from the fatigues and agitations of the preceding day, and then led her forward and presented her as Madame D'Arley. Lady Ruthven was so intent in gazing on the altered face of Caroline, such havock had a few days of harassing

anguish made, that she did not perceive the sudden start with which Oswald heard the name: neither was it noted by the gentle hostess, whose attentions were solely devoted to the same object.

"My dear Caroline," cried her ladyship, "from the very bare outline our mutual friend there furnished me last night, I apprehend I have to condole as well as to congratulate you on your introduction to the land of marriage. But I will hope your misfortunes, whatever they are, may soon pass away, while the happiness which must result from a union of beings so formed for each other must be permanent. I have rarely met a person I more admired than your Clarence."

Caroline bowed her head, but rising emotion choked er utterance, and forbade reply.

"Clarence D'Arley!" repeated Oswald. "I am interested in that name; may I madam," addressing Caroline, "ask you the particulars respecting that individual, for I conceive he must be the one I seek; it is unlikely there can be two of the same name."

Caroline hesitated a moment, and then replied—

'Be your intention friendly, or otherwise, sir, it will I believe be little use for me to withhold information so easily attainable in other quarters."

Oswald snatched the first pause to inform her that his views were of the most friendly kind; and thus assured she answered his inquiries and gave a brief outline of her husband's history, one with which Mrs. Belmont was already acquainted, and Caroline did not for a moment doubt that Lady Ruthven was in pos-

session of all of which Lord Egremont could inform her.

Oswald was a man who had too much command of his feelings to discover any emotion, whatever he might have felt, although the first mention of the name had surprised him into something like it: therefore when Caroline's information was exhausted he merely remarked, that Monsieur D'Arley was the identical person, and he trusted he should be of some use to him in his present unpleasant situation.

When was a young heart otherwise than sanguine! and how readily do we believe that possible which we desire! A gleam of hope shone in the tearful eyes of the young wife, as she thanked Oswald; and the conversation would scarcely flow in any other channel, so fondly did Caroline dwell on all that related to Clarence, if Lady Ruthven had compelled it to diverge to one less tender but equally interesting to her.

"But my dearest Mrs. Belmont," cried her ladyship, while malicious pleasure sparkled in her eyes, "you have not heard Mr. Oswald report progress. Who do you imagine in a late visit to Woburn he has discovered?"

"I cannot possibly guess," cried Mrs. Belmont.

"No less important a person than a sister of my noble lord of Egremont."

"He has not encountered the ghost of Mrs. Saugrober, I hope," said Caroline, whose spirit began to revive.

"Oh! one far more worthy of the stock from which the portly peer has sprung. What is the creature's name?" she continued, turning to Oswald.

"Och! and isn't Laggon?" replied he, affecting a brogue, and turning the subject into the pleasantry he so well knew was acceptable to Lady Ruthven.

"Mrs. Laggon!" repeated Caroline with surprise, who was familiar both with the name and the character of the woman from Clarence and Adela. "Surely my senses are deceiving me, and you could not have said that Mrs. Laggon is the sister of Lord Egremont?"

"You heard perfectly right—she is no other," said her ladyship, "and it seems you know her."

"By report," replied Caroline; "his sister!" she continued, as if she found it impossible to convince herself. "Oh! but I suppose under the circumstances of illegitimacy."

"No, madam," cried Oswald, "that advantage is on his lordship's side."

"I am either mad or stupid," exclaimed Madame D'Arley; "but I cannot comprehend what you are saying."

"I will speak in more intelligible terms, my dear madam," hastily cried Lady Ruthven, as if apprehensive any one should snatch the task from her. "He whom you have so long known as Lord Egremont, is the natural son of an obscure and distant branch of the family whose name he bears, a family that has long been threatened with extinction in its main branches. His mother was a servant of the lowest description. Of her marriage with his father he has forged documents, and by a series of forgeries and falsehoods has succeeded in raising himself to the place he now holds. But the time is at hand to tum-

ble him from the eminence on which he stands so doubtfully. A power of no mean strength martialed by no mean talent comes against him, and he falls !"

" What a blow to my father !" exclaimed Caroline, instantly reverting to her brother's engagement with Miss Egremont.

" Rather say, what an escape for Secton ! But I lose time, I have letters to write."

" Do not rise," cried Mrs. Belmont, " Madam D'Arley and I will leave you, we have yet much to talk over."

Caroline and her kind hostess withdrew, Alice removed the breakfast things, and her ladyship being supplied with pen, ink, and paper, was left to renew her important plans and arrangements with Oswald. She heard with some surprise and still more mortification, that a delay was again necessary; and that it was imperative for Oswald to leave Wales for a short time.

" Trust to me," he cried, as he saw the cloud that gathered on her brow. " I withhold the blow yet a little longer but to bring it down with more tremendous force. New engines of torture are accumulating in my hands, and I will bring them into play as speedily as possible." In this manner he at length succeeded in appeasing her ladyship, and having taken his farewell of the other ladies, early in the forenoon he departed. Leaving them to the daily and hourly discussion of the circumstances of interest in which they severally stood, we will rejoin the party at Woburn.

## CHAPTER XXXI.

THE consternation of the whole party at Bedford, as soon as the news of Caroline's flight reached them, is more easily conceived than described; but one was more immediately affected than any other: that one was Seeton Auber. The whole truth now flashed upon him, and in discovering in Clarence the lover of his sister, he could account for all the appearances which had hitherto occasioned him so much perplexity regarding Adela. More than all, he was now convinced he had no rival in her heart. As that conviction first flashed upon his soul, he enjoyed an ecstasy of delight; but, alas, it was not more brilliant than it was fleeting. What availed all her charms, all her love, while the barrier of his engagement with Sophia rose between them.

Every one was under the influence of perplexed and agitated feelings, when letters arrived which materially increased those feelings in the parties to whom they were addressed. Those to Captain Auber were anonymous, but written by one who evidently knew him and his connections well, and in a tone of style that rivetted his attention; they warned him against the marriage his son was on the eve of contracting, and hinted at the total overthrow of Miss Egremont's

prospects and family. As he hastened to seek his son he heard the marquis order his carriage, and discovered that his lordship was hastening to town; but he had not time to reflect on the circumstance, when the appearance of his son recalled all his attention to his own affairs.

Having put the letters into Seeton's hands, he threw himself into a seat to watch the effect they would produce on his son.

"Can you guess the author of these letters?" cried young Auber, as he concluded the perusal with an agitation the most extreme.

"No stranger, evidently," replied the captain; "and though anonymous communications are and ought to be received with suspicion, there is a tone about those letters which makes me fear there is more in ambush than we dream of. There are other circumstances also, which crowd their confirming testimony on my mind. Lord Egremont is strangely altered; for my own part I have sometimes thought him mad."

"And what has become of Lady Ruthven?" asked Seeton, "her long and sudden disappearance is most singular."

"Seeton!" cried his father solemnly, and pausing after he had pronounced the name. "We are upon a precipice, and we must be on our guard that no power pushes us into the gulf. If but half my fears are realized, if but half the mischief this letter hints is accomplished, this is no marriage for you."

"And what, sir, is to become of Sophia?"

"What becomes of any scion of an unfortunate

house? While the root is good the topmost branches flourish green and verdant; but when the withered stem totters to its fall, the branches fall likewise."

"True, that is the law of nature; but there is another law which bids those who have sought shelter beneath those boughs when they were fresh with verdure, to raise and bind them should they chance to fall. Sophia is more mine than ever. Be her father the guilty criminal these letters would infer, that cannot affect the innocence of his daughter, while the very circumstance leaves her more particularly in want of protection and support."

"This is romance, folly—" but ere he could precede further they were joined by Lord Egremont. With an abruptness of manner that surprised them, he announced his intention of celebrating his marriage with Lady Ruthven in a few days, and continued, (addressing himself particularly to Seeton,)

"What say you to our persuading Sophia to fix the same day? Lady Ruthven and myself are of the Roman faith, and will be united by the good father Francis in the chapel. A special licence and my worthy friend the dean will assist you in the protestant ceremony; and thus will the two holy men make us a couple of Benedicts on the same day."

Various were the feelings that agitated Seeton at this proposal; less various but almost as violent were those of his father, who now desired the postponement of the match as much as he had once anxiously wished its fulfilment.

The struggle in Seeton's breast was short, he felt

that honour, not inclination must decide, and he instantly assured his lordship that he would urge Miss Egremont to accede to the arrangement.

Lady Ruthven, soon after Oswald's departure from Wales, had written to Lord Egremont, offering him her forgiveness on the condition of the fulfilment of his engagement with her. Glad to be relieved from the apprehensions which had so long tortured him, he answered her letter by assuring her he was willing to subscribe to her dictates; the consequence was, that a subsequent letter or two served to fix the day and plan the arrangements, and Woburn presented a scene of bustle and confusion rarely equalled.

Caroline and Clarence seemed utterly forgotten in the new events that came crowding on the scene. Miss Egremont wanted little solicitation to stand as the second bride, and all was anxiety and expectation while the preparations were going forward.

In the midst of all Adela's mind was in a state the most agonizing. In the most pointed and most public manner Miss Egremont had solicited her to officiate as bride's maid; and while her heart died within her at the sound of the request, she had been forced to assent to the acceptance of the honour. As soon as she could, she flew from the saloon to the solitude of her own room in order to counsel with herself as to how she should act. One moment she felt the fire of madness seizing her brain, the next the icy pangs of despair chilled her heart; at length, after a conflict the most fearful, she came to the resolution, at once consonant with the romance of her character and

vividness of her feelings, to stay and witness the immolation of all her earthly happiness; and having done so, seek eternal solitude in her native place.

With the utmost effort of resolution she endeavoured to support her spirits, and in some measure succeeded; but she could not prevent the alteration of her appearance which became hourly visible; her languid eyes, her faded cheek, spoke the inroads which secret anguish was making on her health: a day of effort was usually closed by a night of tears, and prayer and the hope of death formed her only consolation. The prospect of the final termination of her sufferings, instead of invading animated her courage, and as the eventual day approached, she became more calm and resigned than she had dared to anticipate.

Seeton Auber had studiously avoided all those opportunies of addressing or conversing with Adela which he had till now so anxiously sought; but he did not the less attentively mark her look, her tones, and every indication she betrayed; and her evident sufferings added pangs to the smothered anguish of his soul.

At length the morning arrived, and every preparation was completed; all seemed in forwardness, but that Lady Ruthven and the Reverend Dean did not make their appearance. The agitation of Lord Egremont became extreme, when at length a post chaise drove up to the gate, and her ladyship alighted, followed by Mrs. Belmont. His lordship hastily quitted the drawing-room to receive them, whence Adela was in a few minutes summoned to meet her mother.

Such a meeting must be conceived, since the vivid and overwhelming feeling with which Adela fainted on the maternal bosom are not to be described.

Deeply affecting was the scene between the parent and her sorrowing child. When restored consciousness permitted, the former urged her tender inquiries as to the source of the anguish too poignant for Adela to conceal; but she evaded the anxious questions of her mother, though each moment increased her mental agony. One among the arriving carriages brought the protestant divine, who came like an executioner to Adela with all the array of death about him.

Eight o'clock arrived, and the company began to move to the chapel, which was brilliantly illuminated, and where stood the aged father Francis in all the imposing dignity of his sacred office. Never was there a bridal in which mingled less of joyousness of spirit; every one appeared to catch the tone and feeling of the principals in the passing scene. Anxiety, dread, mystery, and dismay were written on the brow of many. Lord Egremont endeavoured to disguise his feelings by an assumption of carelessness and even gaiety, but it sat ill upon him, while a glance at the imperious Lady Ruthven appeared to parallize every effort. All the Aubers looked anxious and uneasy, even the joyous Sir Hubert: while his brother the captain looked as if he had been newly submitted to the torture.

The pale Adela trembled on the arm of the almost equally agitated Lord Elmer, contrasting the gay Adele D'Audigné, who stood near her, supported by Frederic. Almost every individual engrossed by the

singular appearance of the two brides and their bridegrooms, seemed unconscious of the person to whom their immediate attention was due. A kind of breathless suspense appeared to hang on every one, as if the issue of the evening was to present some event fatal and striking.

At the moment that Lord Egremont and Lady Ruthven reached the altar, and the priest prepared to commence the ceremony, the bride stepped back; and with all that majesty of manner and tone for which she was so peculiar, she extended her right arm towards father Francis, motioning him to forbear.

"Stay, holy father. We have our acts of faith, of hope, of charity; you shall have one of justice, aye, of retributive justice!" then turning slowly round, she faced Lord Egremont, in the livid hue of whose cheek might be read the tumult of horrid apprehension that possessed his soul.

Every eye was fixed on her, and large as was the assembly the silence was almost unearthly: some scene of the kind was almost anticipated; but what was to be the result none could foresee, and every individual spectator seemed afraid to breathe lest a sound should retard the document.

With an implacable and unpitying resolut o , Lady Ruthven, having fixed the attention of all present, began. Her tones were deep and distinct, her annunciation slow and impressive, while conscious power and gratified revenge glowed through her whole person, and gave her an appearance almost super-human. Brilliant and beautiful she was, but it was the beauty and brilliancy of an evil genii, while her victim, who

now clearly saw the toils in which he had been caught, seemed to personify suspended animation.

"By what name shall I address thee?" cried the haughty and triumphant Lady Ruthven. "By that of friend or lover? long since have you forfeited all claim to either. By that of the proud title of a peer of Britain, and representative of a noble house? Alas! when did you possess a right to them? Since then there are none in which I can address, tell me in which I shall denounce thee. Shall it be in thy first character of ingrate, in thy next as traitor, or in any of the following ones of forgerer, usurper, oppressor, or murderer?"

A universal shudder followed the solemn pause Lady Ruthven now made. The accused with a strong effort tried to speak, but what he gasped forth was inarticulate.

"Nay, spare yourself," resumed her ladyship, "I have not yet done; when I have it will be time enough for you to defend and disprove, and the same attention will honour you then as now." Again she paused and glanced round at the assemblage in full triumph at the success of her scheme.

Then turning to Mrs. Belmont, she took her hand and led her forward—"By what title," cried the vindictive Lady Ruthven, "should I present this lady? what are her claims? What are her injuries? Where is her betrayed and wronged husband? Where is her *son?*"

She spoke the last word with a deep emphasis, and Lord Egremont started as if he had heard his own knell; but suddenly bursting into a phrenzy of rage,

as the best and only cover for his feelings, he ejaculated —"The woman's mad!"

"You will find method in her madness," she replied with a sardonic grin; and elevating her voice she called Oswald. A door opened, and he instantly appeared as if by magic.

"Let Lord Egremont appear," she exclaimed, "to confront the base-born dark usurper of his rights—this plotter of foul deeds;" and almost immediately at the same door appeared Clarence, who having made a momentary pause, advanced to the assembly.

Has the grave rendered back the dead?" gasped Mrs. Belmont, as she sunk on Lady Ruthven's arm.

"Rise, madam," cried her friend; "rise and behold your son—Horatio Belmont, the true Lord Egremont!"

"My son! my first-born!" exclaimed Mrs. Belmont, as she fell on the neck of the kneeling Clarence, and burst into an overwhelming torrent of tears: then rising and gazing on him, she ejaculated—"Mysterious Heaven! how inscrutible are thy ways! I ask not how these miraeles are wrought; I feel, I know nothing, but that I clasp my son, my Horace. Oh thou dost need no other vouchers than this form, these features, thou model of my long lost Belmont."

What description can do justice to the scene, or to to the countenances it exhibited!

"Wonder sat wrapp'd in mute astonishment."

Adela's pale face lighted into rapture as she flew into the embrace of her newly discovered brother. Seeton was blended with astonishment and delight, mixed with

some relics of the melancholy feelings with which he had first mingled in the scene.

The first thought that rushed into Captain Auber's mind was, that if all proceeded as it appeared, his daughter was Lady Egremont. Various were the feelings and expression of the assembly, yet the prevailing feelings were pleasure at the elevation of the Belmonts, and amazement at the manner in which it had taken place.

The attention with which the affecting scene of Clarence's recognition by his mother and sister was beheld, was at length called away by a circumstance as unlooked for as appalling. Sophia, the betrothed of Seeton, just as her father was hurrying from the chapel, threw herself into his arms, and with one groan expired. Horror took possession of every breast; even Lady Ruthven shuddered. Seeton caught her hand—it was already cold! Her wretched father with an imploring look asked his assistance to support her from the chapel, and tottering beneath the weight of his lifeless child, and his detected guilt, the unfortunate culprit made his way through the passage the company made for him. And immediately after that crowded theatre of wonderful event was deserted.

Little remains to be said: Miss Egremont's death was occasioned by that which has more slowly, but not less certainly killed many women—cosmetics. That which had been designed for external application, she had by mistake taken internally, and thus she fell a victim to the fatal attempt of using art to improve nature.

Her father, struck with remorse, made a general

confession that he had instigated wretches to assassinate the child of Belmont, and had kept spies about his devoted relative for the purpose of barring his return to fortune and distinction. Oswald, to answer his own views, had saved the real child, and committed to the flames an infant corpse, the remains of which was exhibited to the wretched parents as those of their child. To save the real heir alive, Oswald knew was the strongest hold he could have upon his guilty patron. At length the secret was divulged to the usurper, and every effort was used to make the boy a monk. By his subsequent escape from college he was lost to Oswald, but the circumstance which at *another time would have caused that dark agent* of another's crimes the most coroding anxiety, was lightly felt, his passion for Lady Ruthven engrossing all his soul, merging in its overwhelming power even avarice and interest.

That vindictive woman made him the instrument of her revenge, feeding his hopes to the last. She saw Clarence's identity proved, his rights acknowledged; her perfidious lover the ci-devant Lord Egremont, driven into banishment, covered with chagrin and disgrace; then, with some satisfaction at the good she had been the means of doing on one hand, and still greater at the havoc she had made on the other, she threw off the mask; and openly expressed her contempt for the unworthy agent of her scheme of vengeance. Taking a proud farewell of the few she respected, and hurling mockery and defiance at all the world beside, she took refuge in a convent in France.

Her departure led to that repose which all so much required after the jar of so many, and unlooked for events. The rejoicing feelings of newly claimed kindred had not yet had time or opportunity to be expressed; like timid flowers they bowed before the tempest, but as the clouds rolled off, sunshine and serenity came forth to take their place.

The new Lord Egremont found time to draw a parallel between his former and his present fate, while his mother, his wife, and sister wept and wondered over the circumstance, which had so often placed him in contact with those most nearly and dearly connected with him, and yet left him at the same time the isolated stranger, the melancholy wanderer he had long been.

"Oh! my dear mother!" he exclaimed, "when I strayed a homeless unregarded wretch amongst the shades of Conway Vale, how little did I dream that I breathed the same air with her who gave me birth! When Adela came to me like the messenger of hope and harbinger of happiness, how little did I imagine so near a tie united us! And you my Caroline, when you preserved from me perishing in the woods of Nice, now remote from either of our thoughts was the anticipation of a day so happy and so proud as this!"

To regain her tranquillity, (as soon as it was practicable,) Mrs. Belmont returned to Wales accompanied by her son, his wife, and her gentle Adela—gentle indeed! for her spirit had been so long tried, and of late so overpowered by the rapid succession of events, that she appeared utterly passive to the will of others,

She seemed to lay herself upon the stream of fate, careless whither it might bear her, and in this state of feeling she found herself again in her native vale.

It was evening when they arrived, and a pale and clouded moon dimly lighted every object, but there was no trée, no shrub, no winding path, no clustering shade, but was pregnant with recollection "sweet and bitter;" even the shapeless shadows of the distant rocks were eloquent to Adela.

"The life of the happy is all hope," she whispered to herself, "that of the unhappy all memory. 'Tis from the past, the regretted past, I must call up the hues that make life beautiful."

In returning home the image of Seeton Auber came anew to her imagination in all the vivid brilliancy in which love pictures the being beloved, in all the graces with which he first captivated her heart. She had fortune, friends, alliance; but "where alas was *he*," who, of all the world, alone could make her happy.

With that respect to the decencies and decorums of society, which so conspicuously marked him, he attended the funeral of Sophia Egremont, and paid the last solemn duties of respect to her remains; he then turned his attention to her degraded father, proffering to him the same support he would have done had he been still Lord Egremont, and indeed his father. The wretched old man, who for the few last weeks had done the work of years, at first spurned his friendship; but as he felt incroaching imbecility, and all the dreariness of isolation grow upon him, became glad to grasp the kind hand that was extended for his aid; and convinced of the generous nature to which he

clung, he threw himself wholly on the guidance of the young and noble-minded Auber. Anxious to remove him from the scene of former error and late suffering, Seeton took him over to Ireland, and fixed him in a sequestered retreat, where, when his shaken spirits were restored, the sports of the chase, and other pursuits best calculated to his taste and habits, were open to him.

When his task was ended, the master passion of his soul resumed its ascendency; and impatient as was the haste with which he retraced his course to England, the dull hours appeared to succeed each other in endless routine, and still the goal of all his wishes appeared far distant. In his rout he was joined by Lord Rutledge, who hailed him as a brother; but the sun did not set upon their meeting; the news Seeton Auber had to tell changed the destination of the young peer, and instead of flying to England on the wings of love, he made for Italy on those of disappointment.

The best wishes and the kindest concern of Secton Auber went with him, and in return he seemed to leave some of the sad feeling with which he departed. The moon is less changeable than a iover's spirits, and of all the passions there is none so timid as love when it is genuine. Fears that would never enter the imagination under other circumstances, are then received and cherished, and suffered to grow into hideous monsters to fright their victim from his purpose, till the design which led him forth, and which he was on the eve of executing, is abandoned. Thus did Seeton suffer a thousand fears conjured up in the person of Lord Elmer, and his fortune and pretensions, to cloud

the fervour of hope with which he commenced his journey, and ultimately led him to London, instead of a nearer point to happiness and Adela.

He was not long, however, in making a visit to Grosvenor Square, in hopes of meeting in his sister both a counsellor and supporter; but the mansion was deserted, and he was turning in disgust and disappointment from the door, when he was suddenly accosted by the worthy Mr. Robert Bolton.

"Well now, and how do you do?" exclaimed the cit with his vulgar, yet goodnatured grin, "a fine *rumpus* you've been having in the country. Miss Caroline's popped into a fine thing for all her scampering away. Why you don't seemed pleased now! What's the matter?"

"Oh! nothing, nothing," replied Seeton, "I am disappointed in not finding my sister in to n, that's all."

"Well, if that's all, I should'nt look as black as you do. I an't so over anxious to see her for *my* part, though they tell me she's altered, and is as quiet again as she was; but lord bless you, it won't last, she'll begin again making her game of people."

All this time Seeton kept walking on totally unconscious of the vicinity of the li tle square-t ed machine by his side, although at intervals Bolton kept braying forth a laugh that might be heard at any dis ance within a mile. But for thi happy state of absence he would have been much annoyed, as Mr. Bolton was in a most loquacious as well as a merry hu mour, and managed to talk in spite of his *short* breath, and the *long* steps he was obliged to take to

keep pace with Mr. Auber, to say nothing of sundry hops, which he gratuitously threw in to prevent his being left in the rear.

When Seeton reached the hotel where he had taken up his abode, he first became sensible of the inconvenience of such a companion, and was looking at Bolton to consider how he could get rid of him, when he was spared all further trouble by seeing him suddenly make off with the most persevering dexterity; and on looking about to ascertain the cause of the phenomenon of Bolton's *nimbleness* he perceived his brother Frederic coming down the street; the recollections that immediately associated themselves in his mind threw him into a violent fit of laughter, so that on Frederic's coming up he exclaimed—

"Upon my soul I rejoice to meet you in such happy spirits."

"Laughter is no proof of happiness," he replied; "but it would have made the devil laugh to see that fellow Bolton set off when he saw you."

"Bolton!" repeated Frederic with his accustomed quickness. "Where is he?"

Just then Bolton had stopped both for the purpose of taking breath and a bird's eye view of the enemy, and as his ill stars would have it his eye encountered Frederic's, by which he received a shock as if from electricity, for he started round with a grotesque activity which redoubled the laughter of Seeton and communicated the contagion to Frederic.

"Here's laughter, holding both his sides indeed," exclaimed Lord Milsom, advancing; "why what in the name of fate has possessed you both?"

They now retreated into the hotel, followed by his lordship, where Bolton was soon forgotten in graver and more interesting subjects. Here Seeton learned that Frederic was already happy in the possession of the lovely Parisian, and that they were to spend the honey moon in Wales, whither Lord and Lady Milsom would accompany them. It required little persuasion to press Seeton into the party, and after a thousand fluctuations of hope and fear he once more found himself near Conway Vale.

While various encomiums were lavished on the mansion they approached, and the park through which they drove, the new acquisition of the new Lord Egremont, his thoughts were occupied and agitated with very different objects, and his heart palpitated to suffocation as the door of the saloon was thrown open. It is difficult to say whether he was most relieved or disappointed in finding his sister alone.

Lady Egremont received the party with her usual grace and gaiety, inquiries and congratulations were mutually exchanged, till the ladies retired to change their dress, and the gentlemen to look at the grounds, all but Seeton, he lingered with his sister.

"I suppose," cried she, archly, "you've come here upon the wings of love, but allow me to say I can't compliment you on their velocity. Why, my father has been vapouring himself to death about you and poor Adela!"

"What of Adela?" cried he, anxiously.

"What of Adela?" repeated Caroline, "why is she not wearing the willow all this while?"

"Nonsense, Caroline, will you never leave this mockery and talk plain sense."

"Why, you barbarian!" replied his sister. "Who has taught you to curl your lip so disdainfully, and knit your brows so terrifically? Well, really I hope Adela will come in now, because she'll be enchanted with you!"

"Is Adela here?"

"Yes, sir," cried Caroline with mock humility; "but I'll send her away if it displeases your excellency."

"Caroline, a truce with this! you really distress me. Tell me is Adela well, is she happy?"

"How can she be either?" rejoined Lady Egremont, now equally serious with himself. "Have you not neglected her, convinced as you must be of the state of her heart."

"Convinced! pardon me Caroline, I have sometimes hoped, but—"

"But what?" repeated Caroline with some petulance. "You make me ill! Pray don't play Faulkland in real life. What 'loop have you to hang a doubt upon?' "

"Caroline, I think you might make allowances, have *you* known no fears?—"

"Many, and proved them all fallacies. Now just tell me one of your magnanimous ones?"

"Well, then," replied her brother after some hesitation, "Adela has a miniature which she prizes beyond every thing on earth. It is neither her father's nor her mother's—whose then can it be?"

"Your own!"

"My own!" exclaimed Seeton, while his countenance kindled to a blaze of transport.

"Now I hope," cried Caroline, "I may cry with Coriolanus, How like an eagle among doves I've scattered your terrors, (Volscians ought to be the word,) but stop, I'll send the only dove in the house to you; but I shan't tell her you're here. You're looking something like yourself now!" and nodding to him with a playful laugh she left the room.

The new light that broke in on Seeton dissipated the gloom that had clouded his brow, and he wore all his most beaming looks, when the unconscious Adela, whom Lady Egremont had requested to fetch her work-bag, came into the room.

She had scarcely entered when she perceived who was the inmate of the saloon; alike unable to advance or retreat, while the colour now rose, now faded on her cheek, she faultered forth something like a congratulation on seeing him again in Wales, in reply to the rapture with which he addressed her; and taking her unresisting hand he led her to a seat.

"So strange and so rapid has been the course of events, so mingled with the melancholy and the horrible," cried Seeton, "that I have had no opportunity of congratulating you as my heart dictates on the happy changes that have taken place; but I think Miss Belmont can guess how remote from indifference must be *my* feelings on any event that concerns *her* happiness."

"Oh! if you wish to congratulate," cried Adela, smiling and endeavouring to skake off the embarrassment she felt, "my brother is the proper person;

allow me to seek him and send him to you," she added, rising.

"So soon, so willingly can you leave? Oh! fate has much to indemnify me for; think of the days of absence I have suffered, and abridge not the few the only moments of happiness I have known since last I saw you."

"Nay," continued Adela, still attempting to rally, "my brother is impatient to receive your compliments."

"Be your brother's deputy then, or rather make me as much an object of envy and congratulation as he is, and then we shall meet on equal terms.

"Tell me my adored, my beautiful Adela, that I have not cherished a false hope, and that he will be indeed my brother by a dearer tie than yet unites us! Tell me you will repay a devotion ardent as ever warmed the breast of man, accept a homage pure and undivided as ever was offered at any shrine. Oh! Adela, if words are wanting to let you know I love you, you never will be convinced, for I have none in which to utter it." As he spoke he drew her towards him, and overcome by her feelings she sunk upon his breast, and burst into tears. All that the eloquence of love could dictate or tenderness suggest, Seeton poured forth, and won from her in return the acknowledgments of a love devoted and faithful as his own.

In a few weeks, Adela, the happy beautiful Adela, gave her hand to Seeton Auber in the presence of a large assemblage of their mutual friends, and soon after at the pressing instance of the marquis and marchioness accompanied them and their family to Paris, where the

former undertook to arrange for the new peer all the affairs of an unpleasant nature.

As soon as all the more important circumstances were disposed of, Lord Egremont looked round for the friends of his adversity, and among the first whom he sought and distinguished were the Wingregins. In Father Francis he discovered his college preceptor, who, though one of Oswald's dependents, was a worthy man; and he gave what he asked—the quiet possession of his hermitage at Woburn. After his worthy friend and deliverer Wingregin, Lord Egremont became anxious about his friend Malcolm; but any question of his happiness was removed by the announcement which the public papers brought him of his marriage with Miss Melville, a woman whose worse fault was her love of eccentricity.

A few months restored Adela to the bosom of her family, and never perhaps was there a circle more complete. The Belmonts and Aubers who had first met by chance, were now united in the strictest and holiest bonds of earthly union, and under circumstances of the most brilliant fortune and the proudest distinction.

In the course of five years after her marriage, by the successive deaths of Captain Auber and Sir Hubert, our heroine became Lady Auber, but the title most dear to her husband was the one he first gave her, that of *The Beauty of the British Alps.*

THE END.

# DIRECTIONS TO THE BINDER

FOR PLACING THE PLATES





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